EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND ITS MESSAGE TO THE MODERN CHURCH

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EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND THE MODERN CHURCH

By

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AN INTRODUCTION TO EARLY CHURCH HISTORY
etc.

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PREFATORY NOTE

In selecting the message of early Christianity as the subject of the Fernley Lecture, I have had in view the spirit of inquiry which has been awakened in thoughtful minds, especially of the younger generation, in relation to the historical records of the faith. While modern scholarship has invested the New Testament with fresh reality and power, most people are content with the impressions of the early Church conveyed to mind and imagination by the matchless literature of the apostolic age, but have only the vaguest notions of the subsequent developments of the Christian society in the centuries which led up to the peace of the Church. There are obvious reasons for this neglect, but perhaps the chief cause is the widespread belief that Church history is a dull and uninspiring study, and the literature of the period not only inaccessible to the average person, but also extremely uninteresting to any but the student whose duty it is to master the original sources. I have attempted in the following pages to show how Christianity faced the challenge of its many-sided environment, and how the struggle affected Christian life, thought, organization, and forms of worship, modifying, without impairing, certain essential factors by which the gospel vindicated its claim to be a world-religion. The

facts are, of course, familiar to every student of the period; but I am not without hope that in a fresh setting they may throw light on some of the problems with which the Church is confronted in the peculiarly perplexing times in which we are living—problems which we may strive to solve without dismay or failure of faith.

In presenting some pictures of the inner life of the Church, I have used the impressions which I have drawn from my readings in the patristic sources. The references are for the most part my own selection; they might have been extended, but I hope they will be found adequate to their purpose. To the best of my ability I have recorded my obligations in the footnotes; but these acknowledgements very imperfectly express the extent of my indebtedness to the historians and scholars who, in the last generation, have advanced our knowledge of pre-Nicene Christianity.

In the preparation of the manuscript for the press I have received much-valued assistance from the Revs. Alfred Hall and Edwin Owen, the former of whom supervised the text and the latter aided me in making the index; while my old Cambridge friend and former collaborator, Mr. R. F. Davis, carefully revised the proofs and suggested useful emendations. To each of these helpers I am truly grateful for so effectively lightening my labours.

SHEFFIELD,
July, 1924.

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PART I

CHARACTERISTICS OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

PART I

INTRODUCTION

THE beginnings of Christianity have an imperishable interest. The interest is not diminished, it is rather intensified by the fact that when we speak of the origins of the faith we really mean that a new and remarkable stage had arrived in the evolutionary process of man's knowledge of God. We have to postulate a vast preparation of the spirit of man, covering many centuries and shared by many races, for the consummation which we speak of as the Christian religion. But relatively to this upward movement of mankind towards the true conception of the deity who had never left Himself without witness since the dawn of self-consciousness in the mind of the creature, Christianity is more than a consummation ; it is a new fact and an historic fact ; or, if you prefer it, a great creative moment in the march of time, fraught with a fresh spiritual power and impulse, the effects of which have still to be fully realized in the life of the world. In all ages men have turned back with a wistful yearning to the greatest of all beginnings and have felt anew the fascination of that wondrous dawn which succeeded to the starlit darkness of the ages, and awakened the souls of mankind to the light of a new revelation and an undying hope.

This return of the soul of a Christian to the primal source of its inner life is, of course, natural and explicable. Not one cause will account for it. It is due to the play of the tides of the spirit and to the interactions of many moods and many phases of thought as they rise and recur. Sometimes, out of sheer disgust with the existing order, disillusioned and disappointed by the perversity of human achievements, we have sought renewal of inspiration and revival of hope in the spectacle of a new faith, rejoicing in its vigorous youth and setting forth with irrepressible buoyancy to overcome the world. Again, embittered in spirit by the confusion of dogmatic controversies, and sorrowing over the disintegration of the Christian society, men have wistfully reverted to an age when unity was positively and blessedly realized, co-existing with intellectual differences and varying interpretation of morals and doctrine. We have heard more than once the cry 'Back to Christ' uttered with varying motives, but all of them inspired by, and directed towards, that sublime Figure—so real and yet so mysterious—who is now universally regarded as Himself constituting His religion. It is as if we felt that the Church which seems so faintly and so spasmodically to reproduce His spirit can only recover her lost power by understanding her Lord afresh. From quite another point of view we infer that the present interest in the beginnings of Christianity is simply the product of the scientific passion for truth which is one of the nobler characteristics of the age. Certain it is that never before have the immense

resources of modern scientific and historic scholarship been concentrated so diligently and eagerly on the records of the faith. The New Testament has not been superseded as the norm of thought and action in the Church. It is still the text-book in which each succeeding age finds something new for its inspiration and enlightenment. The ancient world is undergoing a real re-discovery under the light that is being thrown on it by archaeological research. Papyri, inscriptions, buildings, tombs, pottery, relics of ancient customs, domestic and national, objects of the arts and crafts and trades—all are examined with an extraordinary eagerness for a hint or a suggestion that may undermine established theories or verify the accepted opinions. The remains of civilization, prehistoric and historic, of all lands, from Ur of the Chaldees to the Solway Firth, from the eastern to the western limits of early Roman imperialism, are being investigated with equal interest by the anthropologist, the archaeologist, and the student of comparative religion.

Subjected, therefore, to the most careful and unwearying scrutiny of critical scholarship, often advanced and daring in its conclusions, the New Testament remains as the one supreme religious classic, the smallest in compass but the greatest of all in influence. It is written in the Greek language. The fact is for ever significant. Greek is the tongue of the most enlightened and intellectual race of the ancient world, the speech in which Homer, Sophocles, Demosthenes, and Plato enshrined their immortal utterances. The New Testament is, therefore, linked by

the bond of a common language to the noblest literature of the world. A utilitarian age which is inclined to disparage a classical education may be referred to this significant aspect of the text-book of their faith. At the same time it stands apart from its classical forerunners. For one thing, its diction is in the dialect of the common people—and here I am reminded of the achievement of one of my most distinguished predecessors in this lectureship, James Hope Moulton, of happy memory, whose name will be for ever associated with the patient research and masterly scholarship which demonstrated the real character of the New Testament Greek. The fact that the writings of the New Testament are composed in the Greek idiom of the multitude is interesting in itself, as in keeping with the character of the Christian faith, which is a religion of the humble and not primarily of the great; but their real claim to our devotion lies in the fact that, judged by their moral and spiritual content, they are unique and without parallel in the literature of mankind. Interesting and important as are the questions of the authorship, date, and real character of the New Testament books, the inspirational power of the New Testament is its real title to our devotion and loyalty. It has already proved its capacity to meet the needs of the generations as they come and go. Each generation is inclined to regard its special difficulties as insuperable, but we never feel in reading the New Testament that its message is inadequate to any situation of world-history, however perplexing and apparently unparalleled. There is a sense in which each era

makes its own theology. Certain aspects of truth appeal more intensely to some epochs than to others. But they are not original; they are derived from the fund of wisdom—ethical and doctrinal—which is stored in the treasury of the Christian Scriptures. In all the works of creative genius there is a universal element which is to be distinguished from their external form, which reflects the tastes, ideas, and fashions of the age to which they belong. Aristotle and Shakespeare unfolded to all time their message concerning life and nature, thought and being, in a medium which was ready to hand and native to their particular environment. The language, the style, the mode of expression, and the processes of thought, are those of their own land and age. We are not allowed to forget that it was in the atmosphere of Greece and Elizabethan England that the rare products of their intellectual vision arose to win the admiration and become the mental stimulus of all the generations. In a still more remarkable degree the New Testament is a classic in which eternal principles of conduct and religion are enshrined in forms of thought and speech characteristic of particular peoples. The language is that of Greece, but the forms of thought are Hebraic; as witness the conceptions of God, religion, duty, nature, and the future, which serve as the setting of the 'better covenant.' Hence the New Testament is rightly regarded as the consummation of the religious development of which the Old Testament is the record; it marks a stage or epoch in the increasing divine purpose, which, although centred on an 'elect'

people, is inevitably and in a real sense universal. So transcendent, so compelling, so convincing in their moral force are the universal principles of life and action set forth in the New Testament that the soul of man is never tempted to discount their value on account of the local, national, and transient elements of thought and expression with which its sublime revelation of God and eternal life is intermingled and interwoven. The New Testament has never become obsolete. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall never pass away.' Knowledge has increased. Civilizations have waxed and waned. But we still turn to its pages for guidance on the mystery of God and our soul. And we find that 'the Life, the Truth, and the Way' are incarnate in the Person of Jesus. The glory of the New Testament is Jesus Christ, and the faith of the New Testament is 'Christ in us, the hope of glory.' 'Art thou He that cometh, or do we look for another?' asked some curious Jews in the days of His flesh. The world has come to believe that there is no other. There is an absolute and final value in the revelation of God which Jesus has given to mankind.

This being granted, it is not surprising that in ages of perplexity, unrest, and disillusionment like that in which we live, thoughtful people have turned to the earlier records of the faith rather than to any contemporary teacher or interpreter of the signs of the times for final assurance. At least, the test of all panaceas for the world's woes is, 'Are they in accordance with what we know of "the mind of Christ"? Can we

find help in the present discontent by reminding ourselves of the charter of the faith, by rediscovery of the secret of its early passion and triumph, by recapturing the ethical vision of the early Christian faith that overcame the world in a crisis less subtle and complex, but no less desperate and difficult, than that with which we of to-day are confronted?' The present study is an attempt—and I would emphasize the word *attempt*—to apply the message of early Christianity to the modern world. It is undertaken by the writer with a frank consciousness of his insufficiency for the task, but also under the strong conviction that our salvation lies in a serious rethinking and re-examining of the first principles of our faith and action. 'In returning and rest shall ye be saved.' Let us, then, endeavour in the first place to state briefly certain of the fundamental characteristics of the early faith so far as we can estimate them, and then consider the challenge which it threw down to its myriad-sided environment, its struggle for acceptance, its steady if chequered advance, its problems and its vicissitudes during the first three centuries of its progress.

In the course of such an inquiry we shall find ourselves face to face with phases of thought and historic crises which offer an analogy to our own times, and as we proceed we shall endeavour to expand them in relation to the existing situation. It may be objected that the study, limited as it is to the age which ended in the imperial recognition of Christianity, must necessarily be defective. One cannot deny the rich

and many-coloured interest attached to what has been called 'the Golden Age of the Church'—the fourth and fifth centuries—the age of the Nicene Creed and the great fathers, Ambrose, Athanasius, Augustine, Jerome, an age fertile in scholarship and intellectual power, mighty in its organizing ability, admirable in its combination of saintly living with profound theological thinking, an age in which the Christian society became united into a stable and nobly endowed Catholic Church, with its devotional life moulded and refined by sacraments, liturgies, and hymnaries, and its inner life administered and disciplined by an able hierarchy. But if the epithet 'golden' is justified as a description[1] of any period in the past, it seems to be most appropriate to the age of conflict when the sacrificial courage, the sublimely patient faith, and the unswerving steadfastness of the scattered Christian communities shine out like stars in a night of terror, when the might of the imperial system was ranged against the faith, when the individual Christian went in daily peril of his life, when he resisted the temptation to slink out of the race and surrender the immortal garland, when he fought the good fight of the faith and laid up for himself the eternal life.

In those far-off days, during which the world-rulers of darkness seemed to flourish like the green bay-tree, and the future was shrouded in a gloom that seemed

[1] The tendency of modern Christians to look for an *aetas aurea* in the past and not in the future is open to criticism; but, seeing that this habit of mind is fixed, it suffices to point out that the particular age is relative to our temperament, conception of the essence of Christianity, ecclesiastical predilections, and other factors.

to be impenetrable—when men's hearts failed them for fear, but remained true to the highest—the faith suffered its keenest test. Having done all, it stood, and thenceforth enriched all human experience, and achieved the triumph which established its claim to the moral devotion of the world by the loyalty of its witness to the great Christian law, 'he that saveth his life shall lose it; he that loseth it shall save it unto life eternal.' The words of R. W. Dale, at whose feet the writer occasionally sat as an admiring disciple while he expounded from Carr's Lane pulpit a gospel of sanity and power, are for ever true: 'It is only by a return to those transcendent facts which have given to the Christian gospel in past ages its power over the social life of Christendom that its power will be renewed and enlarged in our times. Here lies the secret of that freshness and originality of moral thought which is necessary to the Christian Church if it is to retain—or recover—the moral leadership of Europe.'

I

EVANGEL

THE opening words of the earliest and shortest of the synoptic writings, that 'according to Mark,' are: 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God.' This is not a title or designation of the book[1] as a written document; it is a description of its content as the story of how the good news came first to be heard. The term 'gospel' is literally 'good news,' and the original Latin or Greek is transliterated in our less commonly used word 'evangel.'[2] Now the term 'gospel' is so frequently on our lips and so familiar a counter in the common currency of Christian speech, that we are inclined to overlook its extraordinary vividness and originality. No other faith of the world seeks the suffrages of mankind under a designation so homely and alluring. Christianity is first and foremost and for ever an evangel or the announcement of 'good news.' Historically, as the author of the Second Gospel realized, the good news

[1] It may be granted that this passage, with which Rev. xiv. 6 may be compared, paved the way to the use of εὐαγγέλιον as a document or book. But it is a distinctively Christian word, though the cognate verb is used in the LXX. of Deutero Isaiah and Psalms to express the good news of Deliverance or Restoration from Captivity; cf. Isa. lxi. 1, quoted in Luke iv. 18.

[2] But the English word 'god spell' (so first found in English) is really not 'god tidings' but 'good tidings,' as Dr. A. Deissmann points out in his *Religion of Jesus and Faith of St. Paul*, p. 103 f.: '"God" and "spell" are Germanic words which contrive to exist among us—the word "spell" for example, in the word "Beispiel."'

had been heralded by a series of prophetic personalities culminating in John the Baptist, the immediate predecessor of the supreme Prophet of all time. Compared with Jesus, not only John the Baptist, but each of the spiritual teachers of Israel, had been a 'voice' of one crying, 'Prepare the way of the Lord.' Thus, from the first, the note of continuity in the age-long preparation for the faith is sounded in the literature of the early Church. The advent of Jesus is at once a new, transcendent event and a climax in a world-process of spiritual education that had been going on for ages. And what was the good news? It was a declaration of the goodwill of God, of God as He really was from all eternity and is for ever to be. Thus it was still in the line of the earlier prophetic method, but it came to a dark and saddened world rarely cheered by good news, and, in the first instance, to a sore-stricken, proud community which had lost its national independence and languished in subjection to a Gentile empire, wherein to their minds Might had a more obvious sway than Right. It appealed with the force of a new revelation. It was a message from the unseen mediated through the unique prophetic personality of Jesus of Nazareth, and unfolding to the world a new view of the deity. Nowhere defined by a compact formula, 'good news' appears in the Second Gospel as at first connected with the work of its herald, John the Baptist, whose preaching was concerned with repentance for the individual, and repentance with a view to the remission of sins; but while John employed the symbol of

immersion in water to express an inward change of heart or mind (repentance), he definitely pointed to a greater, who (he said) ' will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

This last sentence expresses John's sense of the insufficiency of his work, striking and immediately effective though it was. The world was accustomed to purificatory rites, baptisms, lustrations, and initiations, and to sacramental acts and mysteries like the Eleusinian, intended to bring the worshipper into union with his God. John brought to his prophetic ministry the deeper spiritual insight of Judaism ; he saw the terribleness of sin and the necessity of the change of will which was to break its dominion over the soul. The symbol of baptism was illuminating and helpful, but did not furnish the penitent with the power to live the changed life. That power must come from another source. It must come to the heart with the ' Holy Spirit,' and the ' Holy Spirit ' in the first instance was realized only through the person and influence of Jesus.

We may take it, therefore, that the first note of early Christianity is the call to repentance. It asks for an honest facing of the facts of sin. In the next section we shall deal with the redemption that rids the soul of its burden ; for the present it is sufficient to insist that the attitude of the soul to sin is determined by the view of God. The weakness of all purificatory rites, whether in Judaism or any pagan communities, was that the ceremonial act was deemed by the penitent as sufficient ; in other words, his

security lay in mere outward obedience to the ritual of purging. This defect ran through the whole of existing religious systems, even the enlightened legalism of the Pharisees, who represented the higher morality in the world of their day. By the baptisms and initiations of paganism, by the sin-offerings and other rites of Judaism, men were brought into touch with their deity, but remained either in ignorance of, or indifference to, his real character. It was true that by the ceremonial act a man might become 'right with God'; but his God was a kind of remote judge or potentate, out of touch with the pardoned life. These, as Dr. Glover has pointed out, 'are not intimate relations.' There is no promise and no gladness in them—no 'good news.'[1] Undoubtedly the ancient prophets, like Isaiah of Jerusalem, realized the connexion between man's conception of God and his valuation of sin. The prophet discovers that he is a man of unclean life in the dazzling splendour of the unveiled holiness of God (Isa. vi.). Israel had already grasped the truth that the efficacy of repentance or the changed mind with regard to sin is due to the soul's conception of the character of God. Give the world a new view of God and we get a new world; a 'kingdom of heaven' follows naturally, a reign of God which shall express in human life and in the social order the divine character as newly revealed. In order to point the call for repentance, a new vision of God was essential. Thus we read in Mark i. 14, 15 that Jesus *preached the gospel of God* by declaring *that the time was fulfilled and the*

[1] See *Jesus of History*, p. 156.

kingdom of God was at hand, and adding the command, *Repent and believe in the good news*. The phrase *the gospel of God*[1] or *of Christ* is found frequently in the Epistles of St. Paul, while the writer of the First Gospel[2] characteristically prefers the phrase, *The gospel of the Kingdom*. It is clear that the phrase summed up the characteristic content of the new faith, and was used by Jesus in connexion with the widespread expectation current among His fellow Jews of a coming 'Kingdom.' It is, indeed, one of the providential coincidences of the advent of Jesus that He should appear in an age which longed for a Messiah, and that He Himself should be recognized by His few followers as fulfilling the dream, while to the mass of the nation He was to destroy it by His death on the cross. But the true conception of the Deliverer as well as the emergence of the new order depended on the repentance of the individual, and the good news consisted in that new conception of God which was unfolded by Christ in His teaching and His example, above all in His personality, which by its own light and beauty declared God to the world. The good news, therefore, was only in a secondary sense an announcement of the coming of the Kingdom ;[3] its inwardness lay in the rounded view of God now disclosed by Jesus. He was Himself, in effect, the

[1] 'It is probably a mistake in these cases to restrict the force of the genitive to one particular aspect ("the gospel of which God is the author or of which Christ is the subject"); all aspects are included in which the gospel is in any way related to God and Christ' (Sanday and Headlam, note on Rom. i. 1).

[2] The substantive εὐαγγέλιον is not found in St. Luke's Gospel, though the corresponding verb is found ten times.

[3] See Deissmann, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

good news. It is true that this aspect of the faith was only gradually realized even by His first followers. It developed naturally as the personality of Jesus impressed itself on the imagination and hearts of His hearers. In the Gospels the idea of the Kingdom is at once present and future—actual in the personality and message of Jesus, but yet to be realized in the new order of life which is the great goal of God for humanity. It was not dogmatically declared or set forth in a formula; it was instinctively grasped as the teaching of Christ, both in parable and in works of healing and power, and the original force of His personal life was apprehended by the individuals and groups which He addressed. Our Lord did not terrorize the conscience into repentance, nor did His method consist solely in denunciation of sin. It has often been remarked that His sternest reprobation was reserved for the 'hypocrisy' of the good, i.e. the unreality of a righteousness that disguised an unloving disposition. The imperfect conception of duty which resulted from the failure to apprehend the fullness of God's nature was condemned by Him as an offence for which excessive legalism and the resulting lack of vital spirituality was responsible. Whether dealing with the sinner of the type of the woman taken in adultery or with saints of the Pharisaic order, His method lay in subordinating the outward letter to the inner spiritual meaning of the law, and in the setting forth of a new standard which made both the imperfectly enlightened and the grossly sinful conscious of wrong. He created a divine discontent with

conventional conceptions of right and wrong, and moved to heart-broken sorrow natures dulled by ignorance, moral blindness, fatalism, and callousness to the possibility of better things. He provoked a sense of unsatisfied yearning equally in Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria, the young ruler and the cripple of Bethesda. To all sorts and conditions of people He held up the mirror of a higher truth which had hitherto been ignored or obscured. 'Beholding as in a mirror'—St. Paul's metaphor—'the glory of the Lord, they were changed.'[1]

The positive character of our Lord's teaching, especially in awakening the sense of sin which the New Testament regards as universal and inherent in human nature, has so often been expounded that it is not necessary further to dwell on it. If illustration be demanded, it is to be found in two such different sources as the Lord's Prayer and the story of the prodigal son. The two words 'Our Father' contain a whole theology; they embody the winsome, light-giving, hope-begetting message of Jesus to the world; they assert 'the glory' or manifested nature of God which was to alter all values in human life; they link up together God and man; they reveal an affinity with the divine in the creature and the eternal value and dignity of the soul, truths which all previous theologies had neglected or obscured; they disclose a common relationship binding together mankind of all races and ranks, and so become at once a radiant declaration of God's real character and man's native

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

value as a member of a great family of children and brothers. The remoteness of God from man, postulated by Eastern thought and haunting even the purer faith of Israel, disappears. Estrangement and alienation of the soul from the highest no longer exists; nor does God terrify by His consuming majesty and power; He takes on the aspect of a human, loving Being yearning over the strayed and disobedient of His family.

Our Lord's view of nature and of the world in which man lived was in harmony with His conception of God. We hear nothing of the creation which to St. Paul's mind travailed and groaned under the entail of human transgression, nor does His teaching suggest the antithesis of Augustine, who followed St. Paul in contrasting Nature marred by man's guilt with divine Grace. On the contrary, sun and rain, the flowers of the field, the birds of the air, the cornfield and the vineyard, were sacraments of a divine life which interpenetrated the visible universe and of a divine generosity which went far beyond the deserts of even its holiest creature. If Nature was the theatre of destructive forces—fire, earthquake, and lightning—or if accidents occurred like the fall of the tower of Siloam, they were not to be regarded as judgements on sin. The play of Nature's energies, destructive or healing, was entirely impartial. The universe was God's universe and the home of God's children, for whom His providence was ever solicitous, His beneficence never failing. This is how Wordsworth puts the gospel view of Nature:

A spirit and pulse of good,
A life and soul, to every mode of being
Inseparably united.[1]

Again, the truth of the close relationship between God and man is set forth in the exquisite and moving story of Luke xv., the *locus classicus* of the new theology of Jesus and an epitome of His gospel. Here also the aspects of human failure, the interruption of a normal and happy life by the perverse will that craves for independence, the degradation of natural gifts and promise to the level of the beast, and the bitter consequences of the life of alienation—loneliness, despair, and self-loathing—are depicted in the simple and powerful language of all sublime and tragic literature, but with an unsurpassed directness and spiritual appeal. What our Lord conceived sin to be is clearly visible. He conceived of it, not as a force or element imported externally into the soul, but as a deflection of the soul from its true goal, a perversion of the will resulting in a wrong choice and in disobedience to its truest light and destiny. He beheld the native capacity for God warped and coarsened and weakened by the desire for what God is not and eternally condemns. And over against this inveterate tendency of the ego to choose the lower plane of action stands the love that waits to redeem, the love that is moved with compassion and is prepared to reinstate. This is the good news for which a

[1] Wordsworth's treatment of Nature is at every turn the best commentary upon the love that 'among all lovely things had been.' Cf. the passage—one among many in his poems that might be named—in the *Prelude*, book xii., beginning 'Ye motions of delight.'

sin-stained and disobedient world was secretly craving; and this is the message which is implicit in every statement of the Christian faith and explicit in every appeal that is still made by the preacher to the soul of man.

But we return to our first statement. The real evangel is Christ Himself. His wonderful teaching about God and the possibility of a forgiveness and a rebirth for the sinner might have failed as a mere statement of a new truth; it was because the teaching was so obviously the reflex of the speaker's own personality, and the outflow of His own consciousness of God, that it impressed and convinced His hearers. His theology verified itself in His activities of transforming and life-giving love. We may look in vain for the full statement or conception of the meaning of Christ's person in the gospel narratives. The terms 'Messiah,' 'Son of Man,' 'Son of God,' 'the Servant of God' along different lines of association were in the nature of suggestions or adumbrations of the truth, leading up to the conception of His transcendent character; but they imply germinal rather than fully developed ideas of what He was hereafter to be in the reasoned and formulated belief of the Church. Those who came under the impress of His life and work were for ever trembling on the verge of the truth, but even the form of their conception of supernormal power may owe something to the developed consciousness of the generation in which the Gospels took their final form.

The latest conception of all—that of the Logos of

the Fourth Gospel—stands isolated and alone in the evangelical tradition. It owed its special form to a variety of conditions. The prologue of the Fourth Gospel presents the Incarnation in a philosophic form by linking up the historic fact of Jesus with the previous activity of the Word (or Reason) of God, and representing it as the climax of a light that had been at work in the world since its beginning. The Word was immanent as life and light through the ages until it became flesh and dwelt among us. The Pauline teaching on the pre-existence of Jesus evidently anticipated the fuller teaching of the Fourth Gospel and was similarly derived from Jewish-Alexandrian sources. As it stands, the prologue is at once a product of later Jewish culture and of Hellenism. Moreover, it is an attempt to unfold the person of Christ in terms calculated to win the intellect of the Graeco-Roman world, and in due course was to serve as the basis of the theology of the Greek Fathers.[1]

To sum up, those who came into contact with Jesus were conscious of a sacrificial element in His character which prepared them for such a statement as 'The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins'; while the complementary assertion ascribed to John the Baptist in John i. 36 ('Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world'), startling though it might appear in connexion with so early a stage in Christ's ministry, would be accepted as the expression of the thoughts of many hearts. He was doing God's work in the world, and in the doing of it

[1] See *infra*, p 209.

bringing a God who suffered for man's transgression and yet loved him nearer to men than He had ever been. And the marvel is, He had the power of making men believe in what hitherto had been deemed impossible—God actually at work for the good of His creatures in the form of His Servant. God, who had been slain from the world's foundation, had clothed Himself in the visible form of Jesus of Nazareth, who was now seeking and saving that which was lost. And this Jesus was to find 'faith,' or the response to God's seeking, pardoning, loving spirit everywhere; He was constantly meeting people who were waiting to be received into a friendship or union with God as soon as they were convinced that it was possible. Faith was not something externally produced or artificially inoculated into man's being; it already existed in the soul as an innate capacity for God, and merely required the touch of God Himself to spring into answering acceptance of His will. It is true it was more active in some souls than others. Jesus on one occasion failed to secure what He aimed at from a group of fellow villagers[1] because of their 'unbelief,' a hardening of the nature to the power He brought into play from the vital resources of His own personality. There was a sense in which the first motions of repentance or the changed mind coincided with the uprush of conviction and the will to surrender; to repent and to believe were but two aspects of the soul's overpowering consciousness of the divine reality and power. The immediacy and reality of God, Father and Lover of our

[1] Cf. Mark vi. 5.

spirits—these are the chief factors of the experience of which the soul became aware under the good news of Jesus; its instantaneous consequences were hope, illumination, and renewal. But was sin actually removed? The soul might be conscious of God's love, compassionate and tender, and His willingness to forgive or restore the relationship broken by sin; but how could the experience become permanent? Could man really become worthy to be called the son of the Father-God so wondrously revealed by Jesus? This is still the crux of the soul. Few to-day are unimpressed by the goodness of a divine Fatherhood; but is this knowledge of God's love adequate? Is it not a conception of mere benevolence, which may awaken the vision of better things, but has no power to keep the soul pure? The answer is that the evangel must create a conviction of a real redemption, and a redemption permanent in its effects; otherwise its appeal will be in vain. It may issue in a mere flaccid reliance on God's amiability; what it needs to seal and perfect its message is the blood of the Cross.

II

REDEMPTION

From the first the shadow of the Cross rested on Jesus. Holman Hunt's intuition was sound in the familiar symbolism of his picture of the Carpenter, with His arms outstretched in weariness, and the shadow cast crosswise on the wall of His humble workshop. The religious consciousness of the nations outside Judaism had become fascinated by the conception of a dying god, a redeemer or a saviour who had the power of purifying from sin the soul that entered into mystic communion with him, either by partaking of or being baptized in that which represented his body or blood, or by other forms of initiation which were current in mystery-cults of Egypt and the East. These had already invaded the Roman world before the advent of Jesus. But Israel hardly needed such influences to awaken conviction of the soul's eternal need of recovery or restoration from the power of sin. While sharing the customs of surrounding nations, and deriving from them the forms of its legislation and worship, and in its later stages absorbing the wisdom and thought of Hellenism, Israel had stood alone by virtue of its absolutely unique consciousness of sin, and of a power capable of redeeming from its effects.

Of course, there was a development of this self-analysing, introspective sense of failure and moral demerit. The sensitiveness of conscience to the sinfulness of sin, at first rudimentary, became intensified by the spiritual teaching of a succession of prophets. In its earlier phase it was the corporate longing for God's favour which was inherent in a people to whom the nation and the Church were one; but the vicissitudes of the theocracy in history, and above all the catastrophe of the Captivity, tended to individualize the conception of salvation. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die,' became a watchword of that great priest-prophet, Ezekiel, at once an evangelical and a sacramentalist of an age of transition. An external 'covenant' guaranteeing the favour of Jahweh was supplanted by that inner covenant which had been proclaimed on the eve of the Captivity by Jeremiah. This covenant was to be realized by the individual soul, and based on the unchanging mercy of God. Perhaps all through the history of Israel there was a 'Remnant' which stood apart from the rest of the community by its superior moral sensitiveness and insight; certain it is that in the Exile a deeper sense of sin became united with a clearer vision of God's holiness and His saving power. Unfortunately it was narrowed and hardened by its association with a system of ritual and ceremonial law which came to be regarded as an end in itself. The age of the priest and the scribe witnessed the transformation of the religious life into a blind and exclusive adherence to a burdensome legalism which

destroyed the spontaneity and freedom and breadth of the spiritual outlook.

'In this legal period the true evangelical succession belongs to those who, penetrated by the sense of need, waited for the consolation of Israel.'[1] The link with the Old Testament and the redemptive message of Jesus lay in the conception of the Suffering Servant of the Deutero-Isaiah—a conception born of a suffering, isolated, and tragically humiliated people. Underlying the majestic and soul-moving poetry of this sublime prophet is the belief that suffering which bears the sins of others has an atoning or reconciling value. Such a view[2] is not unconnected with a ceremonial system which, by its animal sacrifices and its ritual of atonement transferring symbolically the guilt of the people to a dumb animal, had for ages served as a medium for effecting a right understanding between God and His offending creatures. But its spiritual virtue and originality are shown by the conception of God which it enshrines. God is no longer an offended deity who has to be placated by the observance of a strict ritual before the soul can find peace; God Himself, in the form of a sufferer, stands in the midst of His people, unites Himself with their destiny, and is seen to be bruised by their transgressions. It is this spectacle of a pure Being carrying the burdens and tragic failures of the impure which moves the thoughtful of Israel to penitence and will always melt the

[1] Cf. Kilpatrick, *E.R.E.* (Hastings' *Encycl. of Rel. and Ethics*), art. 'Salvation,' p. 115.

[2] See Lofthouse, *Altar, Cross, and Community*, for this aspect of the theme, especially chap. xii.

heart of stone. It is clearly this aspect of salvation which fascinated Jesus from the first. Perhaps it is not too much to say that He adopted the rôle of the Suffering Servant from those early days when the scriptures of Israel furnished the inspiring motive of His life-work and mission to His people. Herein He showed His unique spiritual insight and His immediate advance beyond the ideals of contemporary leaders of religion. They had missed the vision ; He lived on it. The Pharisees failed because they never saw the meaning of suffering. Even the martyrdoms of Jewish history, culminating in the heroic deeds of the Maccabees, failed to awaken in them the consciousness that suffering and forgiveness are eternally linked together. It has been remarked[1] that later Jewish Palestinian literature, with the exception of the Second and Fourth Maccabees, has no reference to the truth of vicarious suffering and atonement by the voluntary death of martyrs for the nation.

Thus Jesus laid upon His heart from the beginning of His ministry the certainty of death as the consummation of His redeeming work for the people. The cross was borne from the first. In His baptism by John He became aware of the transcendent fact of divine Sonship, and therefore submitted Himself to the sacrificial calling it implied. The dove of peace rested on His soul from that moment. He had veritably taken up the cross, and the cross became His favourite symbol or mode of expression in calling the

[1] See Bacon in *Hibbert Journal*, xv. (1917) 268, quoted by Kilpatrick, *loc. cit.*

seekers after salvation to a life of self-repudiation. It was His 'secret,' as Matthew Arnold rightly discerned. The tragic death of the Baptist only confirmed His premonition of a violent end as the issue of His own toils. The transfiguration was a further open self-dedication to death, and His outward features shone 'irradiant with a light divine' under the glow of that profound mystic, emotional crisis in which He finally surrenders Himself to the divine Will. The warnings of the impending end fell upon the ears of the bewildered disciples with a sad insistence which only brought conviction when they reached the Upper Room. There, conscious that He would be unable to observe the Passover supper which was to be celebrated the following day,[1] He transformed the simple evening meal into a sacrament of the approaching sacrifice. Henceforth they were to see in a loaf the sign of His broken body, in a cup of wine the sign of His blood shed to ratify a new covenant of which the inwardness was a remission of sins, a phrase which takes us back to His earliest note in announcing the 'good news' of the Kingdom. His death but revealed in the red colours of tragedy the meaning of His life. He was crucified daily, and Calvary only served as the climax of His perpetual self-abandonment. The prayer which has moved the adoring souls of all generations by the sheer beauty of its self-forgetfulness and redeeming love as it fell from His dying lips—'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'—contains an

[1] Following here the chronology of the Fourth Gospel, which is largely accepted and is in harmony with the interpretation of Luke xxii. 15 here adopted and with the narrative of St. Paul in 1 Cor. xi. 23 f.

aspect of His atonement which can never be a fashion or a mere theory of an epoch ; it embodied the final truth that suffering and forgiveness are inevitably linked together. It is suffering that qualifies to forgive ; it is a suffering God that alone can forgive the sins of a world.[1] Forgiveness is the act of a divine love that has suffered for a broken law. The forensic categories of propitiation, substitution, imputation, indebtedness, become superfluous and even derogatory in the light of a love that is predetermined to suffering by creation and is true to its own being by dying. He loved to the uttermost end in order to impart Himself more efficaciously as a redeeming power to the souls of the world. Had He not earlier stated the supreme object of His mission in the memorable words, 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many'? The term 'ransom' is, in fact, the substantive corresponding with, and of the same root as, the word 'redemption' (*apolutrosis*), so familiar in St. Paul's writings, and carrying with it, according to Deissmann,[2] the idea of manumission from slavery. He died for our sins in the sense that while His death was the result of sin and revealed its tragic consequences, it was a voluntary act of self-surrender, the consummation of His own love and of His absolute devotion to the will of His Father. It is, therefore, the basis of all our reconciliation with God because of its divine quality and source ;

[1] See for the working out of this thought D. White's *Forgiveness and Suffering*.

[2] Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 216 f., where the connexion of the word with the slave system of the Graeco-Roman age is well brought out.

'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.'

No doubt these aspects of the Cross were not all at once apprehended by the apostles; but the surprising recovery from the first shock of the tragedy, due to their irrefragable conviction that He was with them, still shows how swiftly they had absorbed the true conception of His Messiahship. That He had incurred the curse of the law by hanging upon the tree was no offence to souls who realized that death in its most shameful form could not destroy His work, while the rising that followed and perfected the dying of their Lord wrought a 'power' in their inner life which sufficed not only to resist doubt, but to realize with abounding hope and joy that they, like Nathanael, would see 'greater things' wrought by Him by virtue of His victory over the forces of sin and darkness. The notes of this 'power' we shall discuss in the next section; meanwhile we observe that it had prepared Christian thought for St. Paul's mystic valuation of the Cross and the Resurrection as dual interconnected factors of the believer's experience. The value of these transcendent events lies in the fact that we die and rise with Christ, identifying ourselves with that supreme self-surrender to the highest which is, in effect, 'a death unto life.' The late Dean of Carlisle[1] carefully examined the testimony of apostolic and patristic writers with a view to discovering the real attitude of the early Church to the atonement of Jesus, and could find no substantial evidence for some of the theories, substitutionary and otherwise, which have

[1] See Dr. H. Rashdall's *The Idea of the Atonement.*

become a stumbling-block to the ethical consciousness of many honest minds. The early Christian Church clinging to the idea that Jesus was Lord was not concerned with a philosophy of atonement; it rested simply on the fact that He who had been brought low in death was now exalted, showing us how to live and how to die; that His love and self-sacrifice had brought man and God together; that though He came in a body under the dominion of sin, sin had been conquered by Him so as to show us likewise the way to victory over it. Thus, without any process of argument, they were content to believe that the way of forgiveness was now open to the believer. It is impossible here to trace the process by which the thought of the Church, confronted by the perennial difficulty of the person of Christ, namely its dualism of natures, shaped out those Christological formulae which have been embodied in the creeds and passed into our theologies. Perhaps it was easier, as Johannes Weiss[1] has suggested, for the ancients to think that a man was in truth an incarnate deity, like the Roman Emperor, or that Plato was the son of a god. The time was to come when the barrier between the human and the divine could not by human thought be surmounted so simply. For the average man it sufficed that he believed that Jesus as the Son of God was a Redeemer-god, who by a sublime self-abnegation had become man and finished the work of redemption on the cross. Johannes Weiss is right when he asserts that 'primitive Christianity made use of forms and conceptions already existing

[1] Cf. *Christ the Beginning of Dogma*, English trans., p. 159.

to give expression to the overwhelming impression made by the personality of Jesus in a manner within the reach of popular comprehension, but at the same time absolute and not to be surpassed.' It was easier for the early Church to conclude that He was divine than resolutely to hold fast the truth that He was man also. The remarkable prominence given to the humanity of Jesus by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is an attempt to correct a prevailing tendency of thought in relation to the High Priesthood of Christ. And the Logos doctrine of the Johannine writings, the latest phase of the New Testament, in contrast with the historically true and homely portraiture of the Synoptics, places the emphasis on the conception of Jesus as the revealer of the Father by virtue of His intimate union with Him. In the Johannine books He is the incarnate revelation of the Father. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father' (John xiv. 8).

To-day there is a marked tendency to return to the Synoptic and historic Jesus and to begin with His true humanity. It is the right method; for only by a clear view of Christ as a Saviour can we explain the progress of the Christian evangel. Basing His appeal on the universal sense of sin, and by virtue of the sheer spiritual beauty of His own supernormal personality, He brought the sinner face to face with a redeeming and pardoning Father. It is necessary to-day to emphasize the sense of sin as essential to the understanding of Jesus; confront the soul with Him, and a new standard of holiness will reveal in its startling light the depth of human failure. But, so far from

driving the penitent to despair, this vision of holiness will be seen to include what Israel, with all its spiritual insight, hardly realized, namely, that the righteousness of God is combined with an everlasting love that will not let us go, and 'is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.'

III

POWER

THE early Christian writers with one voice call this personal influence of the ever-living Jesus a *dunamis* or power; and one consequence of fixing our thought on the historic Jesus is to witness the reality of that power in His earthly ministry. It is part of His personal endowment or 'spirit'; it is what most of the writers of the New Testament mean when they use the phrase 'the spirit.' It was clearly the source of His extraordinary personal magnetism. It was the life-force of a personality which was uniquely capable of controlling or conquering the effects of evil, whether physical or mental, in the various forms which came before Him in the course of His work among the people. We may, if we will, call it, with the modern psychologist, a unique gift of 'suggestion'; for psychology, as recently expounded, undoubtedly throws a new light on the familiar facts of healing with which the gospel narrative abounds. But, however interpreted, the virtue or *dunamis* which went out of Him was an endowment of which He was Himself conscious,[1] and which was manifest to the multitude[2] in the cure of such physical ills as epilepsy. Whatever impression

[1] Cf. Mark v. 30; Luke viii. 46.

[2] Cf. Luke vi. 19.

as to the extent of this power is left on our minds by the evidence of particular cures, the fact of its supernormal quality is undoubted. It called for 'faith' or receptivity on the part of His patients, whether He was coping with physical or spiritual malady, in order that His psychic gifts might be effective. It is a condition which completely harmonizes with the well-recognized facts of psychotherapy. The exercise of His power had a real connexion with prayer[1] and with the consciousness of His own dependence as a human agent on divine power. His personality was the channel through which there streamed down upon others the 'living water' of health, salvation, purity, and moral renewal. What He Himself, under human conditions, derived from the eternal fountain of life, those too might derive[2] who, while using all available human resources or media, 'believed on' Him; hence the healing gifts of the apostles and of the early Church —now lost—are on this principle capable of revival.[3] Faith by the positive acts of 'attention,' prayer, and conscious fellowship with the divine could in those days, and can equally to-day, accomplish the seemingly impossible, both for the believer and those who, under His influence, or communicated power, were themselves drawn into contact with the ultimate source of spiritual renewal.

So wonderful and so well established was the conviction of the 'power' of Jesus that no doubt remained in the hearts of His followers, even after His withdrawal

[1] Cf. John xi. 41. [2] Cf. John vii. 38.

[3] Cf. *The Ministry of Healing* and report of the Committee appointed by the Lambeth Conference to deal with this subject.

from sight and touch, of the perpetuation of His supreme life-giving energies. The teaching of the Fourth Gospel is peculiarly precious in its insistence on the real connexion between His departure and the wider diffusion of His spirit, the same, even if henceforth to be regarded as 'another,' a spirit universal, transcending in His operations the restrictions of locality and of time, yet for ever indwelling in the believer. In the earlier thought of the apostolic age the Lord was 'the spirit'; there streamed from His risen, ever-living presence a power that was eternal, known as 'the spirit of Jesus,' that checked[1] on occasion the preconceived plans of His apostles, but more frequently was felt to be the positive impulse of all that was noble in their life, and the real equipment for service for spiritual utterance and the renewing energies of their ministry. We have hardly realized how marked a feature this sense of spiritual capacity, this endowment of superhuman force, was in the subsequent development of the Christian life in the Graeco-Roman world. It is to be distinguished from another word often translated power (*exousia*), which rather emphasizes the idea of a delegated authority, possession of an official or inherent right of action, a function derived from a competent source,[2] e.g. as when believers receive the right to become the sons of God. But *dunamis* is ability to do and believe certain things which at first we seem incapable either of doing or believing. It acts upon our personality from above,

[1] Cf. Acts xvi. 8.
[2] Cf. Westcott on John i. 12.

from the source of all spiritual power, and is recognizable as divine, or to the real Christian as due to the personal influence of Jesus, so that we can sing:

> 'And every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness,
> Are His alone.'

It would take us too far for our present purpose to cover the whole evidence for the extraordinary reality of this spiritual potency in the experience of the early Christians. It became visible and operative on the day of Pentecost, in fulfilment of the promise, 'Ye shall receive *dunamis* after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you.' It was clearly, therefore, associated with the ever-living Christ as 'the *dunamis* of His resurrection' (Phil. iii. 10), which contained the seeds of endless spiritual and transforming energy. The gospel itself became 'the *dunamis* of God unto salvation to every man that believeth'; i.e. a divine dynamic for restoring man to union with God (cf. Rom. i. 4; 1 Cor. i. 18, 24). Interchangeably, it is a *dunamis* of God or a *dunamis* of Christ (2 Cor. xii. 9). It is—to use Bergson's graphic term—the 'élan vital,' or the outflow of life-force from the vast ocean of the spiritual world, a divine energy which liberates latent resources of personality hitherto undreamt of, makes the weak strong, and inspires with a boundless self-confidence, which is far removed from selfish arrogance or self-assertiveness, the natures to which the achievement of ethical and spiritual grace seems unattainable. Cries

the apostle, 'I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth (or perpetually infuses His *dunamis* into) me' (iv. 13). Modern teaching has shown how powerful a lever this vital force, whether by auto- or hetero-suggestion, whether self-employed or acting through or from an external agency, is in overcoming certain forms of nervous disease.[1] Through his consciousness of the availability of superhuman resources 'far more than we ever ask or imagine'[2] (note how St. Paul here strains the resources of language to express the inexpressible) the early Christian was filled with a boundless enthusiasm or joyousness, a sense of freedom which gave him unrestricted scope for his spiritual purpose and ideal, and transformed life from a drudgery into a magnificent opportunity for doing the will of God and exhibiting the beauty of a holiness in the commonplaces of the daily routine, whether he was a slave or freedman, a rich man or a poor, a cultured man or a barbarian. He was emancipated from a rigid conventional system of negative morality into the positive enjoyment of an immeasurable divine power, which made him conscious that even humble gifts could be made contributory to a world's redemption. The imperative of duty which Judaism had nobly uttered was now reinforced with the sense of limitless ability. To the 'Thou must' of the Law, youthful Christianity replied, 'I can.'

[1] See *The Spirit*, art. by Hadfield.

[2] Eph. iii. 20 (Moffatt).

IV

WITNESS

With the sense of 'power' begotten of the Spirit of Jesus the New Testament always associates the duty and privilege of being a 'witness,' a noble word with the glorious associations of the countless sacrificial lives and deaths[1] of Christian saints. The idea of witnessing is linked with that of power in the *locus classicus* of Acts i. 7: 'Ye shall receive power . . . and ye shall be My witnesses (*martures*) in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the limits of the earth'; no city, however distinguished, no land, however rooted in the pride of privilege and name or isolated by sectarian narrowness, is to be excluded from the scope of the gospel; the world at once becomes the parish of the Spirit-empowered personality. It is in the Fourth Gospel that the word 'witness' (*marturia*) assumes a striking significance in the unfolding of the author's conception of Christ and His work. So august and many-sided is 'the truth' that in multiple forms it has to be commended to the world. In the first instance, the author's thought rests upon the

[1] The witness of martyrdom will be dealt with later (see p. 149 f.). Suffice it to note that the word 'witness' (*μάρτυς*) even in the New Testament begins to be charged with the significance of sacrifice and striving for a great cause unto blood; see Acts xxii. 20 of Stephen, and Rev. ii. 13 and xvii. 6.

eternal union and intercommunication of God and man, of which the person of Christ is at once the sign and medium. Our Lord assigns His authority to the 'witness' borne concerning Himself by the Father; in other words, there is a complete unity of will, work, and word between Himself and God which is recognizable by every one who 'is of the truth,' that is, whose moral nature is in affinity with what He reveals. The whole personality of Jesus[1] expressed in works of power and of love, wrought on body and on soul, carries its own immediate testimony to its divine origin and relationship, and to the function and end of His incarnation. It is true that 'the scriptures,'[2] the 'writings' of Moses and the prophets, bear witness also in the sense that the goal and fulfilment of the world's hope lay in Jesus. The latest of the prophetic succession was John the Baptist, whose witness consisted in recognizing the consummation of the Old Testament in the person of Jesus. Lastly came the witness of disciples, which in this Gospel is narrowed to their experience of the earthly Christ, their recollection of His teaching, and their observation of His historic actions and their effects upon the outsider. But their witness has to be reinforced by the immanent Spirit, which takes of that which is Christ's and declares it (John xvi. 14). In the end, therefore, the testimony to Christ's works and words, which is external and historical, derives its force from the inner experience of those who have found in the gospel

[1] See Westcott's Introduction to Gospel of John for an exposition of the idea of 'witness.'

[2] Cf. John v. 30–47 for this argument.

'spirit and life,' and have been 'born from above'; and it is at this point that we touch the spring of all Christian progress, the secret of the first propaganda and missionary efforts of the apostolic age, and the perpetual source of the Church's advance towards the spiritual conquest of mankind. The efficacy of our witness to the truth depends on the reality of a 'conversion' or spiritual renewal, issuing in a life of self-renunciation.

But the mere proclamation of the truth would have missed its object if there had not been an ethical proof of its influence upon the life and character, not merely of its official exponents, but of all sorts and conditions of men. However heroic the travels and hardships and risks of the first apostles and their co-workers, the labour would have been in vain if they had not, by sheer force of their own personality, commended the truth to every man's conscience. The power by which the Spirit appealed to the pagan mind was the power that issued in a holy and regenerated manhood and womanhood.[1] By its fruits was the Christian evangel known and its witness demonstrated as a new and mighty energy, capable of transforming and renewing those who were dead in trespasses and sins. It has often been remarked that, full of doctrinal exposition as are the Pauline letters, doctrine is never dissociated as a body of abstract truth from its effects on character, and the utterances of the apostle are

[1] Cf. Peabody, *The Christian Life in the Modern World*: 'As we read the Gospels there meet us two great words which announce the nature of the teaching . . . the first is the word Power; the second is the word Life . . . Power is generated to be applied. Life is given to be transmitted' (p. 32).

ethical in their ultimate aim and content. Compare the Epistle to the Romans with the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle. There are some obvious resemblances; in both writings practical insight is linked with metaphysic; in both the *summum bonum* is relative to the nature of man. But while to Aristotle man is a moral agent, who is guided by reason to a certain practical ability in the choice of good and the avoidance of evil, to St. Paul man, as a moral being made in God's image, needs no longer to depend on the direction of abstract reason for attaining the highest self-realization; the norm for him is the spirit which he experienced in Christ Jesus (Phil. ii. 5, Moffatt), that is, the ideal of human activity. The Greek philosopher believes that a man acquires virtue or moral ability (*aretē*)[1] by repeated acts which become a habit; specific virtues are related to the actual circumstances of life, and manifested in so far as there is a certain uniformity in these circumstances or relations of life. To St. Paul the actual and concrete of life is a quite secondary consideration; the faith, love, and hope of the Christian are absolute values of the soul, demonstrating their divine origin in the limitations and hardships and crises of life, quite independently of that *eudaimonia* or well-being which to the Greek philosopher was the final end of ethics. If we take the four cardinal Greek virtues—fortitude, wisdom, self-control, justice—or such virtues as temperance, liberality, high-mindedness,

[1] The word is found in Phil. iv. 9; 1 Pet. ii. 9, and 2 Pet. i. 3, 5; but of these passages the first alone suggests the classical meaning of moral excellence, and is cited 'as if the apostle were anxious not to omit any possible ground of appeal' (Lightfoot).

and compare them with St. Paul's 'harvest of the spirit'[1]—love, joy, peace, good-temper, kindliness, generosity, fidelity, gentleness, self-control—we feel we have entered another world. How much richer in moral intensity and reality is the ethical content of the Christian ideal of conduct! The reason is, of course, that the Christian scheme links up together morality and religion; the 'perfect man' is the highest expression of the divine life; he incarnates God, and therefore every one who aims at the good has adopted the will of God as his rule of behaviour.[2] Christianity lifted the end or motive of everyday actions to a higher plane than any philosopher or mystic of the ancient world had dreamed of; Christ was the Alpha and Omega, the first letter and the last, of the alphabet of human experience. His nature and His name was love. We find the key to all knowledge and all mysteries when we have mastered the secret of His mind. It was the spirit of sacrificial love—incarnated in all its fresh beauty in a NEW MAN—that opened a new epoch in the history of ethics. Even the old cardinal virtues of Greek philosophies assumed a fresh moral significance when the object of life was seen not to be self-realization, but self-surrender. It was as if the wind of the Spirit had created 'an ampler ether, a diviner air,' in which old virtues regained a lost freshness, and new virtues blossomed into starlike flowers, like the crocus of the Alpine pasture at length disclosed amid the melting snows. Certain it is that

[1] Gal. v. 22.

[2] Cf. Jones, *A Faith that Enquires* (Gifford Lectures), p. 556.

Christianity glorified a virtue like humility (*tapeinophrosunē*), which was a menial in the old philosophy, and raised her to royal estate, as in Tennyson's poem Cophetua made the beggar-maid his queen.[1] Every one knows how Love (*agapē*) was sublimated to a spiritual essence far removed from *erōs*, or passion, though the Greek Father, Ignatius,[2] dared to use the latter term, exclaiming, 'My Erōs has been crucified,' because of the subtle thought that the Cross had fused the baser elements of human nature into the white flame of a new purity. Love was thus the sovereign of all the Christian graces. Then there was Joy (*chara*), a new gift to a cheerless world worn out by its pleasures; and Peace (*eirēnē*) a sentry[3] of the soul, protecting it from the invasion of dark imaginations and desires, or an umpire deciding between two issues and rewarding the better,[4] more often a state of the soul now brought into reconciliation with God; and Sincerity (*eilikrineia*), that fair flower whose petals blossomed in the sunlight of God and caught 'the white radiance of eternity'; and Gentleness or Meekness (*präutes*), which makes the conflicts of will to cease, and softens harsh self-assertiveness; and many others. We have only to set these starlike graces of the Christian character over against the catalogue of sins or 'works of the flesh'[5] condemned by the Christian apostle, or contrast them with that even more lurid and revolting picture[6] of pagan vices upon which 'God's wrath

[1] Cf. Lecky, who notes in his *History of European Morals* that the elevation of the servile virtue ignored by ancient ethics is characteristic of a religion that loved the slave no less than the freeman.
[2] *Ad Rom.* vii. 2. [3] Phil. iv. 7.
[4] Col. iii. 15. [5] e.g. in Gal. v. 19, 20. [6] Rom. i. 18–end.

is revealed from heaven,' in order to feel that a moral springtide had broken upon a drear and wintry world. If (to use the figure of an early Christian writer)[1] the world was to become a sort of prison-house (*phroura*) to the Christians, they succeeded in rearing in its fetid air some rare products of character which breathed abroad an aroma of beauty, a savour of a sweet smell. The virtues were sometimes expressed in unfamiliar terms or new coinages. But generally the old terms were revitalized, and the Greek words of the Septuagint (LXX) were employed and charged with a new intensity, just as the great terms righteousness, sanctification, and redemption were taken over only to become saturated with a Christian significance, and just as terms of the mystery-cults were used in order to make the subject-matter of the new truth intelligible to minds familiarized with Hellenistic culture and thought. The vocabulary of Christian ethics attained a new richness and beauty, appealing in various ways to a society compact of strangely diverse elements; to the Jew steeped in the Old Testament scriptures, the Greek delighting in the spirit of civic liberty, and to the Roman familiar with the terms of imperial government and law.

Enough perhaps has been said about the witness of the Christian character to a new conception of God, and a new spirit at work in personality; but nothing impressed the empire so much as the Christian witness to the truth of immortality, and notably the immortality of the body. The Christian life bore witness

[1] *Epis. to Diognetus*, 5.

to other doctrines of the faith, but the immortality promised by some of the mystery-cults had created a widespread interest in the future life. The immortality of the soul was a philosophic conception that had never appealed to the masses, but the belief in a bodily resurrection, which was connected with the record of our Lord's appearances after His death, was peculiarly attractive to a world yearning for the farther shore. Holiness of character was in itself a sign of a moral resurrection or quickening, just as our Lord's holiness[1] was stamped as eternal by the fact of His conquest over death; but holiness now became an aspect of an everlasting being, capable of being revivified after a sleep till the Day of Judgement, or translated immediately at death into the eternal fellowship of God. The certainty of a future life guaranteed by our Lord's resurrection was associated with a new respect for the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost; sins of impurity and unnatural vice were condemned by the apostles in unmeasured terms, because they believed in the hallowing of body, soul, and spirit, in fact, the sum-total of personality. Whatever crudities attached to the ordinary conceptions current in early Christian circles of the resurrection of the body, the doctrine saved them from a false asceticism on the one hand and an antinomian laxity on the other, perils to which Gnostic thought, with its insistence on the dualism of God and matter, was exceptionally prone. The Eastern—and we may add the later Catholic—ideal of

[1] Compare the glowing statement of Rom. i. 4: *τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν.*

self-mortification and the rigours of monastic asceticism are equally alien to the sanity and balanced common sense of the New Testament; though, as we shall see, in the second and third centuries asceticism became steadily more prominent in Christian thought and practice. *Enkrateia*,[1] or self-control, was a real passport to an immortal life; and the connexion in early Christian teaching between bodily purity and bodily resurrection is not to be overlooked. The teaching of our Lord on the eternal value of personality was stamped upon Christian thought by the belief in His resurrection and His perpetual glorified existence. Death was brought to naught because its fear and sting were removed. To depart and to be with Christ was far better. The more poignant and painful the sacrifice of death in martyrdom or any other disciplines, the more glorious was the reward of the eternal world.

[1] Cf. Clem. Alex. *Protrep.* i. 9. The Christian is not to adorn himself with fillets embellished with wool and purple, but with a wreath woven from the leaves of self-control (*τῆς ἐγκρατείας τὰ πέταλα*).

V

FELLOWSHIP

ALL the hopes of moral redemption and of a future existence held out by the new faith to the world would have become illusory but for the link of a spiritual fellowship (*koinōnia*) which held together the first disciples. This from the first was a vital factor. The suggestion of an organized community called the Church or *ecclēsia*—an assembly of His followers—in Matt. xviii. 17 (with which may be compared the occurrence of the term in the famous 'rock' passage in the same Gospel, xvi. 18) has impelled critics to assert that this section of our Lord's teaching is of a late origin, and one of the 'Matthean' additions to the First Gospel, belonging possibly to the second century. It is open to doubt if the use of this term necessarily involves this interpretation, but it is to be noted that the passage is attached to that which contains the great saying, 'Wherever two or three have gathered in My name,[1] there am I in the midst of them' (ver. 20). Here is the germ of the Christian Church, whether in its earlier or later significance; here is its

[1] Here note εἰς τὸ ὄνομα μοῦ, which reminds one of the use in the baptismal formula '*into the name* . . .' and expresses the aim and issue of fellowship, deep spiritual union with Himself; while τῷ ὀνόματι, used e.g., in connexion with 'prayer' in John xvi. 23, expresses rather the character or nature of the action.

true basis and source of authority—the presence of Christ. Further, this saying has all the appearance of a contemporary message, for even if our Lord was then a wandering evangelist, He saw that the perpetuation of His will lay first in the fellowship of disciples; secondly in a fellowship which His realized presence alone could make vital and enduring. Like so much in His teaching, its meaning could not be fully apprehended till later; but that is the nature of all great teaching—its immediate significance is not its whole content. Discipleship involved the duty and discipline of association or brotherhood. With all its insistence on the claim and privilege of the individual in his access to the highest life, the Christian evangel proclaimed with no uncertain voice that membership in a society was equally essential to the perfection of the life both of the individual and of the community. The world could only be saved by a fellowship based upon the Fatherhood of God and the Lordship of Christ, a fellowship composed of individuals who shared the same experience of their Lord's redeeming grace, and were held together by a common object and ideal. It was no new conception. The Greek spirit fashioned by its experience of the free life of the city-state (or *polis*)[1] was the noblest example the ancient world afforded of the fruits of fellowship. A recent student[2] of the *Laws* of Plato points out that the highest ideal of Greek religion involved a community of friends and

[1] Cf. Paul's use of 'citizenship' (*politeuma*) in Phil. iii. 20, and *συνπολίτης*, Eph. ii. 19.

[2] Cf. G. M. Sergeaunt in *Hibbert Journal*, vol. xxi., p. 679.

common acts of worship. 'No man shall have sacred rites in a private house, but when he is disposed to sacrifice, let him place his offerings in the hands of the priests and priestesses who have under their care the holy rite, and let him pray himself and let any one who pleases join with him in prayer.' This conception, of course, dominated Hebrew religion; the individual merged himself in the tribe or nation, and when the Torah, or law, superseded the temple as the centre of unity, the local synagogue nurtured the spirit of fellowship when the central shrine of the Jews was no longer available for a people dispersed among the nations. The synagogue, in fact, became the type and model of the earliest Christian communities; it shaped their common life, and even the method and form of their worship.[1] The Upper Room of Jerusalem was the first meeting-place of the disciples, where the sacred rite of the holy communion was established by their Lord before Calvary, and where, after the Ascension, they assembled preparatory to the great event of Pentecost.

The picture of the first Christian community (Acts ii. 44-end) is that of a fellowship which pooled all its resources, material and spiritual, performed common acts of worship in the temple, and enjoyed social fellowship in their homes, and all in a spirit of gratitude, cheerfulness, and simplicity which impressed the multitude. At first there was no separation from the Jews; but such a separation became inevitable when

[1] The term *synagogue* is used in James ii. 2 for a Christian assembly. It was abandoned in favour of *ecclesia*, also a term used by the Jews. *Ecclesia* became the favourite term of the Christians for designating their assemblies, and also the Christian society as a whole, the *ecclesia* of God, as St. Paul daringly calls it (1 Cor. xv. 9; Gal. i. 13).

the Jews failed to rise to the height of Christ's view of God and humanity. In fact, the Jewish refusal of the teaching of Luke xv. was fatal to any real fellowship between the Jews and the first Christian disciples, and the later action of St. Paul in rejecting an external rite as a universal condition of entrance in the Christian Church was the natural outcome of the divergence of the Jewish and Christian standpoints. Further, the whole tendency of the new society was to lay the emphasis on morality rather than on the ritual or ceremonial—on such virtues as brotherly love, kindness, and philanthropy. The members of the separate societies are called 'saints,' which means neither faultless nor fully-developed Christians, but Christians in the making, in the sense that they acted on a recognized and experienced surrender of the will to God. Every member of the Christian society is a 'saint' by virtue, not of attainment, but of loyalty to his high calling, the upward movement of the personality towards God.

The apostles founded these fellowships, or *ecclesiae*, as we know from the Acts and other New Testament writings, all over the Graeco-Roman world, in Syria, Lycaonia and other parts of Galatia, Mysia, Caria, Lydia, Bithynia, Macedonia, Achaia, Italy, and possibly Spain ; but the founders did not constitute themselves into an official order ; they were content to be travelling missionaries (the primitive meaning of the word 'apostle'), occasional visitors, spiritual guides, non-resident leaders, leaving the communities to rely on their own resources, not 'having lordship,' as Paul said,

'over your faith, but helpers of your joy' (2 Cor. i. 24). They were witnesses in communities of which each member was potentially or actually a witness, and priests only in the sense that each individual belonged to 'a royal priesthood.' The effects of this moral authority were remarkable. There is nothing quite like it in contemporary history. True, there were street preachers like Diogenes the Cynic, and travelling lecturers in philosophy and the newest thought to be found all over the empire; but probably their teaching was less valuable in its influence than that of resident lecturers, who exercised their calling in a given city and could found a school, like the Platonic philosopher Xenocrates at Rome, or the Stoic Athenodorus at Tarsus. In the larger community where they were known they could probably see more conversions, like that mentioned by Horace[1]—the case of a drunken reveller called Polemon who turned into the lecture-room of Xenocrates at Rome and was taken to task by the professor, who disdained such pleasures (*impransi*). Whereupon Polemon quietly slipped his garlands from off his neck and emerged a convert to temperance (*mutatus*). More wonderful is the sequel, for it is said that Polemon became the successor of his spiritual father, Xenocrates, as lecturer and exponent of the tenets of the Academy.

The Apostle Paul retained his hold on these scattered groups by personal visits, and by sending co-workers, like Timothy, as bearers of his letters. He, indeed, was recognized as the leader of the missionary

[1] See *Serm.*, ii. 253–6.

movement, and his personal influence was such that he could plead with the community at Philippi to work out their salvation, not simply when he was present, but the more strenuously when he was absent. These groups or self-contained local churches differed in their personnel; they consisted of Jews born, 'god-fearers' or people of Gentile origin who had been attracted to Judaism as proselytes and had now accepted Christ, and, thirdly, converts directly drawn from paganism. The earliest Jerusalem group was doubtless composed almost entirely of Jews, and Jewish ordinances retained upon these brethren a strong hold. Probably, too, the prophets and teachers, men with a *charisma*, or spiritual gift of exposition and instruction, owed their rise and influence, as Harnack suggests, to Jewish precedents; prophets, in particular, whether resident or itinerant, as we know from the *Didachē* or *Teaching of the Apostles*,[1] while subordinate to the apostles, exercised spiritual functions, and occupied a position between apostles and teachers, while deacons were duly ordained by the rite of laying on of hands as stewards for the widows and the poorer members. In the Christian groups founded in the world of the Mediterranean the triple element above mentioned created an internal problem of great complexity; and this was further intensified, as we see in Corinth, by the peril of parties and the opposition created between 'spirit' and 'office,' between the inspired spiritual men and the professional

[1] This most interesting record of early Christian Church life and practice may be dated about A.D. 100; but some scholars assign it to a later period of Church organization.

leaders or officials of the Church. Thus at the outset we have an antithesis, which was to exercise in many ways a profound influence on the course of Christianity through the centuries; the revolt from ritual to mysticism, from ecclesiasticism to prophetism perpetually recurs. We have only to think of such movements as Montanism, Lollardy, Hussism, Franciscanism, Puritanism, Quakerism, and Methodism. The general oversight and discipline exercised by the apostles naturally became inadequate as the number of the 'brethren' increased; presbyters (also called bishops) became leaders of the local church; and they in turn elected a president, calling him 'bishop,' and thus transforming a generic title into a designation of a specific office. It is not, however, necessary for our purpose to dwell on the development of the monarchical episcopate which arose early in the second century, the distinction between clergy and laity which was accepted at the end of that century, the appointment of the chief (or metropolitan) bishop of a province, the primacy of the bishop of Rome, and finally that most vital—some would say most disastrous—of all developments, the presidency of the nominally Christian Emperor Constantine over the first great Christian council at Nicaea. The study of the internal organization of the Church, as it kept pace with its expansion as a missionary faith, has an interest of its own; but the explanation of its progress as a new gospel will always be of more enthralling fascination to the inquirer than the details of Church order and constitution.

EPILOGUE: APPLICATION TO THE MODERN CHURCH

THESE five essentials of early Christianity have never been absent in the Church's appeal to the world. The content of the evangel is unchanged. Enriched by the experience of twenty centuries, its message is as potent and convincing as it has ever been. The evangelic spirit may sometimes appear to have been frozen by epochs of worldliness, or obscured by excess of ceremonialism, but it has never been destroyed. Nor can it be; the faith of Christ would cease to be a faith if it ceased to be a gospel. The forms of evangelism are as various as the conditions—intellectual, social, racial—amid which the truth has to be proclaimed, and with which the preacher of Christ is confronted. All we have to guard against is the cheapening of its sublime import by methods which are irreverent, sensational, and vulgar. On the other hand, we may allow a foolish prejudice and a narrow intolerance to restrict our methods of approach to the conscience of the multitude. The danger to-day is that we should disparage emotion, and in our abhorrence of the hysterical forget that emotion has degrees of intensity, ranging from the calm to the tempestuous. The effects of a spiritual awakening are in a sense incalculable owing to the complexity of the psychological

forces that are distributed in personality. At least, if we follow the method of Jesus both in relation to the individual and the crowd, we must make use of all gifts and endowments of personal power to win the conviction of the hearer. The method of Jesus was always reasonable, restrained, tranquil, and free from excitement; it was an appeal to the will and to the conscience when both seemed dormant or dead. We have only to compare His varying method of dealing with the cripple of Bethesda and the woman of Samaria, the one apparently torpid and lifeless, but capable of an act of will, the other morally atrophied, but still susceptible to a religious appeal. He certainly abhorred publicity. To-day there is a cult of publicity which is an eloquent sign of the changed conditions of modern life as compared with those of the gospel. We have always to remember this in order to safeguard our comparative judgement of Christ's day and our own. Our standard of action nevertheless must ever be an appeal to the essential 'mind of Christ.' Is He magnified or degraded by the methods we adopt? The signs of the time point rather to the emergence of a sane evangelism, which, while recognizing that every mental act involves an emotion, will give larger attention to reason and volition in the attempt to secure, not a temporary awakening, but a rational, sober, and permanent verdict in favour of religion. And to secure such a result evangelism must ever be a redemptive energy. It must bring the soul face to face with a power that can restore its lost peace. It may appear that the awakening of the sense of sin is becoming very

difficult among the civilized peoples of the West as it is proverbially difficult among the populations of the East. If the sense of sin is dormant, it can be awakened only in one way, and that is by the presentation of a Redeemer. There may be no consciousness of gross moral failure, but there is in every soul the sense of a standard not yet attained, a coming short of what we know God to be, that is, of His 'glory.' It is not a theory about the Cross that saves ; it is the contemplation of the Crucified as the sublime embodiment of the eternal love, suffering, stricken, and desolated by the sins of the world, and yet by that very experience reconciling the world to itself. But let it be stated that it is a contemplation that means 'attention,' the receptivity of a humbled heart, the faith which involves self-identification with, and self-abandonment to, a Power that can make all things new.

It is perhaps the consciousness of a certain weakening of power that is at the root of our religious despair to-day. In face of the great crises through which we have passed during and since the war, we have sometimes been tempted to ask, 'Who will show us any good?' Has religion failed, or is it failing as a divine force that heals the woes and sins of the world? We look about us, and perhaps are discomfited to find that the average Christian shows very little of the *dunamis* which the New Testament so strongly emphasizes as the basis of the Christian character ; nor is he himself conscious that a supernormal force is animating his personality to higher things in the struggle of life, its littlenesses and its perpetual strain.

Here we must distinguish between the faith and those who profess it. The faith is a mighty *dunamis*, but it works in natures not always or equally ready to respond to its impulse.

The Church has shown symptoms of this failure in recent days. But there are happy signs that the reproach of its own powerlessness is bearing fruit. One of the most significant and hopeful features of modern Christianity is the refusal to be bound by tradition. The old feud with science is dead. Science, indeed, is teaching religion many lessons. It is accomplishing great things by its control of natural resources and by the mastery of sea and air. The multitudinous wealth of nature open to patient investigation, and still unexhausted, is being utilized to advance the sum of human happiness. No doubt the gains of science are frequently exploited for the acquisition of material wealth, a process which is accomplished by a callousness to the rights of labour and the universal claims of justice. But against this we have to place the unselfish spirit in which the man of science works; his aim is to increase the sum of knowledge regardless of his own interests or gain or health. Moreover, science gets things done while religion dreams; that is the verdict of the average man. But here he indulges in a false analogy. The visions of the spiritual life have always out-soared the lagging achievements of practice; the conquest of the air is relatively a simpler thing than the conquest of will and soul, as the co-operation with natural law is an easier process than the living of a holy life. But science assuredly teaches us how

necessary it is to utilize all available resources within the realm in which it works. The religious world has never yet exploited to the full the resources of its spiritual kingdom. It has not yet fully co-operated with the new laws of Christ which Christianity has been uttering with insistent and unchanging conviction for 2,000 years. This at least can be said for Christianity. The fact that the world is slow to receive Christ's message of eternal life has never weakened the Church's irrefragable sense of the absolute value of that message; nor has the difficulty of reducing the vision of the ideal to practice succeeded in checking the zeal, the missionary love and patient labours of the generations that have passed since the days of Pentecost. Happily we are beginning to realize we live in the era of the Spirit; the new light that has been shed on the Bible, revealing its ever-living beauty and reality; the clearer desire for a unity, if not of organization, at least of co-operation and of love; the belief that under the guidance of the Spirit the Church can secure a wider diffusion of the blessings of the gospel than we have ever dreamed, and can adapt her message to the ever-developing needs of civilization,—these, among many signs, are significant of a new sense of the unfailing power of the faith. So far as the witness of the individual life is concerned, its efficacy depends on the use of its spiritual resources. Power and witness are co-ordinate terms. We can never 'bear our witness to the truths we have embraced' unless the spirit that is in us is 'the spirit of power.' There never was an age in which the moral teaching of Christ had a greater

opportunity. Every heart is yearning—though sometimes unconscious of the source of its yearning—for the application of the Christ-mind and the Christ-spirit to the social order. The very chaos and unsettlement of human life, the disappointment of our hopes of peace, the unloosening of the restraints of civilized society and law, are facts that silently condemn the spirit of hate and self-aggrandisement of which they are the unwholesome harvest. The beauty and reality of the spiritual world are making a stronger and stronger appeal. What Rudolph Steiner calls 'the Christ-impulse' is at work in the world—the impulse that co-ordinates all forces of spiritual elevation, science and art, the imaginative faculties of poet, painter, artist, prophet, in a vast endeavour to spiritualize the conditions of human thought and activity. Certainly a revival of the sense of the eternal value and dignity of the individual life is required as the condition of the 'wider commonalty' of peace, goodwill, and righteousness.

It is a great gain to modern Christian thought that we have reasserted the Johannine conception of 'eternal life' as a present as well as a future possession. We have outgrown the earlier forms in which the doctrine of a bodily resurrection was expressed, and are content to believe in the persistence of the 'ego' under the changed condition of an immortal life which but perfects the soul-experience of this life. How far and in what sense corporeity can be predicated of it is, of course, a speculative problem. But the disappearance of the old crude and material views of

heaven and hell is no reason for neglecting the truth of the eternity of consequences, or for rejecting the New Testament view that our life here has a distinct relation to the quality of immortality to be enjoyed hereafter. It is to be feared that the desire for immortality has waned in many souls, a fact which need not be unduly lamented if it co-exists with a sense of the eternal value of character, and if the result is not a materialization of the life that now is. What is to be deprecated is the waning of belief in the eternity of personality; for if we lose the New Testament conception of the future, which moved the early world as nothing else did, it is clear that while the inherent beauty and value of goodness are unaffected, human life will lose its meaning, and the problems which are rendered less hopeless in consideration of the probationary character of our earthly existence will become still more obscure. The doctrine of immortality is bound up with our belief in God as revealed by Him who is 'the Resurrection and the Life.'

Another of the vital questions religious people have to ask to-day is this: Is the spirit of fellowship practised by the early Church being maintained to-day? Is not the nexus of common worship and the observance of the sacraments too often the recognition of a social duty which may easily become perfunctory and cold? Assuredly these external acts of fellowship have a history hallowed by noble associations and sacred memories; but do they completely fulfil the mind of Christ? It is not easy to realize in the narrow spheres of our ecclesiastical life that we have ties with

our fellow Christians who are outside our own fold. It is a paralysing thought that we stand apart as Christians, living up to our lights and fulfilling our duty in the Church to which we are attached, celebrating our union with our Lord in our own forms and methods, but seeking no opportunity of expressing our fellowship in worship or sacrament with members of other Churches, however ready we may be to co-operate in common enterprises for social well-being. There surely is an element of eternal value in a Christianity which has survived the dissidence that splits Christendom into so many fragments. We cannot, we are told, make too much haste in the direction of intercommunion, lest it involve a breach of discipline and an interruption of our traditional practice. We are shaping visions of a unity which shall co-exist with diversity, a nobler ideal than any universal organic union ; but we are strangely slow to accept the leading of the Spirit, which is calling on us to break through the traditional forms of Church order in order to give expression to the sublime impulses of Christian love. Unity is a mere abstraction without acts of unity which will make it easier for each to participate in the intercommunication of spiritual light and power and devotion. To gain it we shall have to make sacrifices, to abandon personal preferences and tastes, to recognize that Church law may be a bondage, and courageously to adventure upon a new way of life. The history of the Church is largely a series of schisms, secessions on the ground of doctrine and interpretation, often carried through in a spirit of sincere loyalty to

conscience and duty, but none the less disastrous to the common life. It is a melancholy reflection on the limitations of human insight that the forcible repression of heresy by a faith which was itself originally a heresy has never really succeeded in its object. The wording of the orthodox creed, over which the Christian world was to be split in twain in the fourth century, is now open to criticism in the light of modern knowledge. The Deism of Arius, officially defined and banned, lives on to-day ; indeed, there are few ancient heresies that have no modern counterparts. There are multitudes of devout and saintly Christians whose conception of Christ would be expressed in terms by no means adequate to orthodox theology. The happy age of Christianity closed with imperial recognition. Up to that point the Christian ethic was more vital than dogma, and a movement like Montanism, with its passion for spiritual liberty and its insistence on the superiority of inspiration to its formal expression, though repudiated by individual bishops, secured thousands of adherents, and attracted many outstanding Christian leaders, including Tertullian, who embraced it towards the end of his life. Nevertheless, the fifth century condemned it as a heresy. Marcionism, again, as an interpretation of Christianity was fiercely criticized by Tertullian ; but it was never officially repudiated, as it certainly would have been if it had emerged in the fourth century. Its moral sincerity and its critical acumen in relation to the canon of New Testament were to bear lasting fruit. The amazing thing in early Christianity is that while there

was room, owing to its diverse elements—Jewish, Greek, and Oriental—for endless divisions, the views of Marcion, Valentinus, and Celsus,[1] although criticized and condemned on speculative grounds by individual bishops and thinkers of the Church, were never banned by united authoritative action. We have to remember, too, that we have not always the original treatises which are criticized; only those of their Christian critics. If we had, for example, the complete works of Marcion, we should be in a better position to judge of the general fairness of Tertullian's treatise against him; but we have enough to assure us that he was a great thinker and theologian, with an immense following which lived on side by side with other Christians. Says Dr. Rendel Harris in his account of Marcion's *Book of Contradictions*, 'There was in that age no *quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*; his company was just as much a Catholic Church as any other.' Individual Christians differed like St. Paul and St. Peter; but they did so without rancour and passion. It was surely a divine influence that shaped out for them the ideal of 'sweet reasonableness,' the spirit of moral and intellectual freedom, and of a sane and wise fellowship which the later highly organized and narrowed Catholicism of the fourth century was to lose. The earlier age, indeed, was slow to accept it, but it did succeed in elevating to an ideal the virtue explained in St. Paul's beautiful

[1] Celsus used the multiplication of heretical sects as an argument against Christianity. In reply, Origen (*Contra Cels.* book iii.) points out that truth is only advanced through differences of opinion, and instances the case of medicine and the course of Greek philosophy.

message: 'Doing nothing in strife nor vainglory; but in lowliness of mind thinking others better than yourselves, looking not at your own things but the things of others.'[1]

Nevertheless, as a condition of this wider spirit of comprehension and fellowship, the ultimate issues of which for all our Churches, especially in the common task of evangelizing the world, are of immeasurable interest, let us begin by cherishing the spirit and the acts of fellowship, upholding the opportunities within the Church itself. The followers of John Wesley ought never to forget that they are heirs of a Church order which from the beginning of its history has in the class-meeting provided for the culture and development of Christian fellowship. There have been periods in which the institution seemed to lose heart and vigour; but if the writer may draw on his own post-war experience in the conduct of fellowship meetings, it is showing signs of healthy renewal. We are coming to see that we must follow up pulpit teaching by the more personal method of the *seminar*, the formation of groups of earnest people who meet together frankly to consider the things of the spirit, the problems of Christian life in the modern world, the truth about the Bible, its interpretation in the newer light of comparative religion and archaeological discovery, and finally the application of Christianity to the social order. If the ministry will ban obscurantism and with fearless candour face the theological and other difficulties of our generation, a new interest and value

[1] Cf. Phil. ii. 3–4.

and helpfulness will come into the fellowships, study circles, and similar forms of that spiritual education and culture which we must at all costs endeavour to foster. The germinal impulse is to be found in the circle of disciples in the Gospels, and then in the fellowship-groups, or guilds of early Christianity. We see our Master Himself always eager to meet the inquiring mind and answer its questions ; and next we see the faith which He founded adapting itself to the needs of restless, eager, intellectual minds in the Hellenistic cities of the empire. ' If there is any fellowship of the Spirit ' let us fulfil the joy of Christ and all the saints by practising it, cherishing it, and living for it in season and out of season ; one of its fruits will not only be a wider spiritual outlook, but also a quickened intellectual grasp of the problems which Christianity seeks to solve.

There is, of course, a much wider application of the spirit of fellowship which takes us far beyond the limits of the churches of Christendom. They hold the principle which is to heal the dissidence of nations, of governments and dynasties and the social grades of humanity. Nothing could better have illustrated the need of civilization than the uprush of primitive passions which originated the war and accompanied its operations. Europe was divided into two armed camps, and the whole world shared in, and suffered from, that desolating schism. To make the law of fellowship operative over all life, to solve the social differences and jealousies of human communities, to abolish war as the arbiter of international differences, to

reduce the world—separated by differences of language, race, colour, religion, government—to a working agreement, appears a titanic task ; but surely this is of the very essence of that kingdom of God which our Lord came to establish. The ultimate triumph of Christ over the civilized world depends on the emergence and prevalence of the will to peace.[1] No miracle will bring about the desired result but the miracle of the changed heart, the changed temper, the changed valuation of the goods of life. Every fellowship, however obscure and apparently insignificant, which by bringing man into mutual understanding with his neighbour cherishes the ideal of the reign of love, is helping to create a corporate penitence and faith which is the condition of all successful endeavour to do the will of God on earth.

[1] See on this point pp. 171–2 *infra*.

PART II

CHALLENGE OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY TO ITS ENVIRONMENT

PART II

THOUGH the foregoing summary of the characteristic notes of primitive Christianity is admittedly imperfect, it will suffice to show that the new faith offered a challenge to contemporary thought and society. Christianity was born to a conflict, as its early followers were speedily to discover. Christ had, in effect, thrown down a gage to the world-powers, to all existing faiths, and to the traditional principles upon which civilization had been built up. There is, therefore, a perennial interest attaching to the impact of Christianity upon its environment, and conversely no less interesting is the influence of the rich and complex life of the Graeco-Roman world upon a faith which challenged the culture and philosophy of Greece and the dogmas and rites of numberless cults, old and new, upon which the soul of mankind had been nourished. This subject has been treated in recent years by a succession of distinguished historians and scholars at home and abroad, and particular aspects of the study have been elucidated by painstaking research and scholarly insight. Therefore, it is with a sense of incalculable obligation to my predecessors that I propose to present a rough outline of the background of early Christianity. Without such an outline our study would be incomplete, inasmuch as certain phases and developments of

Christian life and thought in the first three centuries can only be explained by reference to the interrelation of the gospel with its rivals on the one hand and with secular history on the other.

I

JUDAISM

First and foremost, as we have seen, Christianity offered a new criterion or valuation of the Jewish religion of which it was lineally the offspring. It threatened in the eyes of the Pharisees their spiritual supremacy. It did so, not by violent opposition, and the avowed policy of supersession, but by what to the traditional mind was even more deadly—its claim to be its true consummation and completion. Christ had come, 'not to destroy, but to fulfil.' The old law was, in effect, a negative system of moral prohibitions and ceremonial taboos. It was to be transformed by the positive power of the new principle of love—a principle indeed inherent in the creed of the Jewish people and much that was humane in their practice, but never widely and generously applied to life as a whole. Love was to purge the Torah of its narrow restrictions, its tendency to foster legalism instead of righteousness, and its parochial outlook on the world. It was to destroy legalism, and to permit a liberty of interpretation which was to be based, not on traditional dogmas, but on the newer light thrown on ethics, individual and social, by the conception of a divine Fatherhood, and the brotherhood of the race. The

letter had killed ; the spirit was now to make alive. Judaism was prepared to accept Jesus as a Rabbi, a teacher, a prophet sent by God, until He proclaimed as against the Pharisees a new ' enthusiasm of humanity ' and its resultant broader and larger conception of moral duty, which henceforth was to acknowledge the claims of the morally defective, ' the people of the land ' hitherto ignored. The Jew may have had a passion for God ; he had very little for man.

After the death of Jesus had satisfied the hatred of the extremists, the leaders of orthodox Palestinian Judaism were prepared to tolerate the followers of the Nazarene. But the preaching of Stephen, an extreme opponent of Jewish claims, and his death put an end to all hopes of conciliation. The faith, as the result of the persecution thereupon instituted, spread into Syria, and overran the provinces of Asia, Galatia, and Bithynia, finding its way to some of the great Aegean ports, as well as provincial cities like Antioch of Syria and Tarsus, and the Phrygian-Galatian towns of Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. It used the synagogues as its basis only to provoke everywhere the opposition of the extremer type of conventional Jews. The Judaizers were St. Paul's bitterest opponents on his travels through Asia Minor and Greece ; his treatment by the imperial authorities was lenient and considerate by comparison. Even the final split might have been saved if Christianity had accepted the compromise favoured by St. Peter ; but St. Paul's resolution averted a catastrophe which would have reduced the Christians to the level of a Jewish sect. The rite of circumcision

was abandoned as a seal of the Gentile acceptance of the faith. St. Paul cut the knot at the Jerusalem Council. Henceforth Christianity was to win the Gentiles in far greater numbers than ever Judaism did. Valuable indeed the 'god-fearers,' or Gentile proselytes to Judaism, had proved to be as an intermediate element from which hundreds of new converts of the faith were drawn and were still to be gathered. In fact, Christianity, which historically was under obligation to the spiritual tutelage of Israel—the law being a *paidagogos*[1] leading to Christ—now stood in antagonism to a system from which it derived its scriptures, its great conceptions of faith and duty, its moral intensity and sense of sin, and a host of kindred conceptions. It was an astonishing issue, demanding heroic courage and spiritual insight from the leaders of Christianity. The Jews were spread over the empire; possibly they numbered five millions. They were hated and satirized and misunderstood by their masters, but respected for their unity and influence as a nation. Above all, Judaism was distinct from Christianity in that it was a *religio licita*, or a licensed religion. Nevertheless, at first the average man mentally connected the two faiths, and to the rapid and unsophisticated vision of the crowd Christianity appeared to be a kind of by-product of the Jewish religion and a sect attached to the Jews. The imperial authorities, on the contrary, after the first generation learnt to distinguish the two. Christianity was not to be an authorized faith (a *religio licita*) until nearly

[1] Cf. Gal. iii. 24.

three centuries had elapsed—an eloquent testimony to its uncompromising zeal. It was therefore continuously during this period suspect. If Judaism was eventually to cease to win proselytes, Christianity was to owe it an eternal debt for having broken the spiritually fallow ground of the Gentile world. Henceforth the Christian apostle was to be the sower of the seed of the Kingdom. Indeed, Christianity from the first was the real missionary faith that its Founder intended it to be, and when Jewish propaganda declined, it held the field alone. Judaism lost its opportunity now, as it did six centuries later, when Mohammed had a vision of its support at a critical moment in the fortunes of Islam. An amalgamation of the two great Semitic faiths of Judaism and Mohammedanism might have changed the whole spiritual outlook of the Eastern world. It was not to be ; and to-day, while the two missionary religions, Christianity and Mohammedanism, are rivals for the spiritual conquest of large areas of the East, Judaism remains a purely nationalist, if still a vigorous, faith, liberalized in its outlook to some extent by contact with modern thought, but officially maintaining its traditional attitude to Christianity.

One element which passed over into Christianity calls for comment. As a particular form of the permanent spiritual hope, of which the fact of Christ was the real fulfilment, it had a great vogue in the early community. This was ' apocalypse '—a phase of religious belief peculiarly Jewish, holding no place in the Oriental beliefs or mystery-cults of the Graeco-Roman

world. First finding expression in the Old Testament Book of Daniel, it was a product of the Maccabean, or martyr age, of Judaism. The end of the great empires was to usher in a reign of God, and a whole literature of 'apocalypses' by unknown authors appeared to expound or illustrate this concept. In detail, these writings are tedious and uninteresting; their spiritual value lies in the fact that they kept alive the ideal of a new world. With the fall of Jerusalem their vogue among the Jews declined. Up to that point, as we see from 'the little apocalypse' of Mark (xiii.) and the discourses on the last things in Matthew and Luke, the ideas of judgement, retribution, a day of the Lord, and a great renewal had exercised a wide influence on contemporary Judaism, so wide, indeed, and fascinating that our Lord, with His unique insight, employed the current apocalyptic terminology to express the larger and nobler concepts of His own teaching. The theory of Dr. A. Schweitzer that His words imply His belief in an imminent catastrophe, which He deliberately hastened by His voluntary death, is now discredited. As a matter of fact, the language of vision is not limited to a given age. To Jesus the kingdom of heaven was already in existence, although its actual consummation belonged to the future. The seed of the kingdom has been sown. The fall of Jerusalem to the Christian consciousness was a judgement of God—an event, indeed, which in the retrospect may have influenced much of the language ascribed to Christ in the reported discourses. Certain it is that His teaching about

judgement and the future state is coloured by the ideas current among the Jews. And, further, it is clear that the conceptions about the last things which lingered in Jewish-Christian minds prepared the way for the widespread early Christian expectation of the Parousia, or Coming of the Lord, of which we find clear evidence in the earlier letters of St. Paul. It is not possible to discuss the various phases of this belief to be found in his and other New Testament writings; suffice it to say it was sacredly cherished; and finally, under the stress of imperial persecution, Christianity produced an apocalypse of its own, embodying in a Christian form many of the ideas of Jewish thought. It may, indeed, be a Jewish book at bottom, adapted to Christian ideas, and certainly inspired by an existing crisis in the fortunes of the Church; but of this more hereafter.[1] We have, however, in the Fourth Gospel—the latest product of the Christian consciousness in the New Testament canon—a view of the Parousia and of judgement which, if slow to take root in early Christian thought, has commended itself to the modern mind as setting forth the permanent elements of truth in Christian apocalypse. The judgement had already been pronounced by the fact of Christ and is perpetual; the Parousia took place at Pentecost, and the kingdom of heaven is being shaped out of the world-order by the perpetual immanence of the spirit of Christ in the hearts of the faithful. Enough has been said to show that while the debt of Christianity to Judaism was very great, the Christian fundamental conception of the

[1] Cf. pp. 152–3.

union of God and man as eternally native to the deity and expressed in an historic Incarnation and Redemption, stoutly challenged the adequateness of the Jewish theodicy.

The Christian writers of the early centuries found it necessary to point out the differences between Judaism and Christianity and to demonstrate the superiority of the latter. The unknown author[1] of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, which is generally placed among the writings of the Apostolic Fathers (Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Barnabas, *Shepherd* of Hermas, and the *Didachē*), asserts that the system of animal sacrifices prevalent among the Jews is clear evidence of a view of God which is on the level of that of the heathen with their ' deaf images,' while their feasts of the new moon, their scruples about their food, the Sabbath, and arbitrary observances of the seasons, are foolishness. He does not hesitate, therefore, to speak of the silliness and deceit and fussiness and presumptuousness of the Jews. Clement of Alexandria (b. *cir.* 150), whose chief aim was to demonstrate the futility of the old Hellenic religion and to commend Christianity to the Greek mind, recalls the spiritual power of the witness of the prophets such as Isaiah, Hosea, and Jeremiah ; but, generally speaking, he is more concerned with the vogue of the Gnostic sects than with the rivalry of the Jews. He does not take up an attitude of hostility to the Jews. On the contrary he cordially recognizes their place in the

[1] Date unknown—somewhere in the first half of the second century, say from 130-150.

continuity of revelation; pointing out[1] that 'the Greeks in Greek fashion and the Jews in Jewish fashion' comprehended God, while the Christians are a 'third race,'[2] knowing God spiritually (*pneumatikōs*). Tertullian (b. *cir.* 155) takes an entirely different line. So long as the Jews think of Jesus as a mere man[3] they can have all the advantages they like from being a *religio licita*; the Christians are prepared to be reckoned His servants and to suffer condemnation. Admitting that the Christian idea of God is not different from that of the Jews, he holds that the dispersion of the Jews and their isolated position in the world is a judgement for neglecting the claims of the Son of God, whom their scriptures foretold as the world's Illuminator and Leader. They rejected their incarnate Saviour and crucified Him, and yet they were taught to worship the Lord through man. It is through Christ and in Christ that God desires Himself to be known and worshipped. 'We affirm,' cries this boldest of all defenders of the faith, 'and affirm openly and cry aloud, torn and bloodstained under your torture, "We worship God through Christ."'[4]

After all, this was the main issue; the new faith challenged the Jewish mind with its fundamental belief that the Christ, foretold as the Coming One, had already come. A friend of mine imagines that the Christian Church would have been a nobler thing if St.

[1] Cf. *Strom.*, vi. 5.
[2] Cf. *Protrep.*, 8.
[3] Cf. *Apol.*, whole of chap. xxi.
[4] Dicimus et palam dicimus et vobis torquentibus lacerati et cruenti vociferamur: deum colimus per Christum (*ib.*, *op. cit.*).

Paul had been a Greek and not a Jew. There would then have been none of the legalism and ritualism which in their narrower modern forms he considers to be an inheritance from Hebraism. It is doubtful, however, if St. Paul's work would have been so vital and universally effective if he had not been a Jew. An understanding of the inner life of Judaism from personal training and knowledge was a valuable qualification in the great leader who controlled the fortunes of the new faith at a critical stage, when it was bursting the limits of its primitive environment. And would a Greek have had the spiritual instincts and vision born of the long ancestry of a deeply religious race, and adequate to interpret the new faith to the many-sided world of the first century? The external connexion with Judaism may have hampered the progress of Christianity at the outset; but it surely was a providential arrangement that salvation should come first of the Jews, that its Founder and His first disciples should have been Jews, and that its first great missionary, St Paul, should have allied with his Greek learning and his assimilation of the Greek spirit of liberty the spirituality and noble ethical passion of the Jews—a passion, too, nurtured on those scriptures which first opened in the Hellenistic world the sense of a world revelation of God and quickened the expectation of a great Messiah-redeemer, whom Christianity declared Jesus of Nazareth to be. Add to this—what, after all, is the decisive consideration—that St. Paul, the converted Rabbi, is shown everywhere in his writings to be a keen critic of the weakness

of the law.[1] Further, he is no ritualist ; his doctrine is unaffected by the mystery-sacraments and their mechanical and magical implications, though, as we have noted, his language shows clear traces of his acquaintance with these cults. Neither the sacramentalist nor the legalist can claim support from one to whom Baptism and the Lord's Supper were rites that sealed a conscious experience of, and witness to, the faith, and were not essential to the new birth, while his Hellenic sympathies enabled him to interpret the mind of Christ from the standpoint of spiritual liberty unfettered by the narrowing associations of the Torah.

[1] Cf. Rom. viii. 3 : *τὸ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου.*

II

THE CLASSIC RELIGIONS AND EMPEROR-WORSHIP

CHRISTIANITY, then, offered a better thing to the world than the Jews, although their pure theism had attracted the thoughtful minds in the Hellenistic East, which was created by the conquests of Alexander, and also in the Western Empire, where Jews had also settled. From that notable intellectual centre, the city of Alexandria, the Jews, under the Ptolemies (from 322 B.C. to 146 B.C.) had acted as mediators between the old mythology and cosmogony of the Greeks and the spiritual view of God they had learned from Moses and the prophets. Christianity was now to make a direct appeal for a yet higher conception of God, of the soul, and of duty. As we have already stated, a large number of their earliest converts were drawn from the class known as 'god-fearers,' who had rejected the gods of paganism for Jahweh. These were now invited to accept the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the age of Alexander the old conventional belief of the Greeks in the gods had begun to fail. The mind of poet and philosopher had already shaped out a larger and nobler conception of the deity than the

popular polytheism had ever adumbrated. The puerility of an Olympian hierarchy of gods and goddesses, whose faults and follies were those of weak human nature, had long been manifest to the cultivated Greek. Philosophers like Heracleitus (b. *cir.* 513 B.C.) and Anaxagoras (b. *cir.* 500 B.C.) frankly satirized the whole scheme. The plays of Euripides (b. 480 B.C.), while still employing the old mythology and cosmology as a poetic framework, expressed the views of a rationalistic and advanced mind in revolt from conventional religion. The metaphysical thought of Plato (b. *cir.* 428 B.C.) and of Aristotle (b. *cir.* 384 B.C.) transcended the commonplace and childish materialism of the popular notions of the gods, though both thinkers continued to use them in the exposition of their philosophies; but while rejecting polytheism as a national faith, they succeeded only in producing an abstract conception of the deity too vague and intangible to be of service to common humanity. There was a striking ethical intensity in the great tragedians, in the solemn prophetic majesty of Aeschylus (b. 525 B.C.) and in the calm lucidity of Sophocles (b. 495 B.C.). The former set forth, e.g., in the *Agamemnon*,[1] the unalterable connexion of sin and punishment and the fixity of the hereditary curse, while the latter, in the *Antigone*[2] upholds the claims of the 'unwritten laws' of righteousness and compassion as against the rigid conventionality of human enactments; but the background was still the old group of jealous gods and the

[1] Cf. 176 f. and 737 f.

[2] Cf. 454: ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν νόμιμα.

hopeless infatuation of erring humanity, whose fatal transgression perpetuated the divine curse generation after generation.

Captured Greece took captive victorious Rome in the sense that Rome was now to absorb both Greek literature[1] and Greek religion. Rome, indeed, had a native religion of her own, but from the first she was ready to accept the religious ideas of foreign peoples, and to identify her gods and goddesses with the Greek—Jupiter with Zeus, Minerva with Athene, Mars with Ares, Venus with Aphrodite, and so on. In its earliest form, based on the simple attitude of the farmer and shepherd towards the powers of Nature, which either assisted or checked their labours, it was largely on an observance of annual festivals in accordance with a religious calendar known as the *Fasti*; but there was no clear conception of supernatural beings, who remained mere spirits or *numina*, without personal form or personality. On the establishment of a city state these ideas were definitely associated with its fortunes. Priesthoods whose functions were to provide and administer the recurring festivals were placed under the charge of a *Rex sacrificulus*, or later the *Pontifex Maximus*. The prominent deities were Janus, god of the doorway or beginnings, his female counterpart Vesta, goddess of the hearth-fire, Jupiter, god of the open sky, and Mars, god of war, also called Quirinus by a community settled on the Palatine Hill. Fear was at the base of these cults, not joy. Nevertheless, out of

[1] With the exception of 'satire,' the literary form adopted by Lucilius, Horace, and Juvenal in their attack on the vices and follies of society.

the system came the virtue of *pietas*, or the sense of duty, which acted as a mediator between its citizens and what Warde Fowler[1] called 'a dangerous spiritual world.' It was at first purely confined to the patricians, for the *plebs* had no place in it; but the distinction died out as Rome extended her dominion, and with that her range of deities and worships. The building of the great temple of the Capitoline Hill, the shrine of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, is to be ascribed to Etruscan influence. The Sibylline books,[2] which were oracular utterances in Greek verse containing prescriptions for dealing with prodigies, pestilences, and the like, were preserved in this temple and committed to a new priesthood, which the Senate and magistrates consulted in time of need. The acceptance of the Sibylline oracles illustrates the growing tendency to welcome foreign deities of Greek and Oriental origin. The critical spirit which in Greece had broken up the belief in the gods was to act in the same way on the Romans, who from the time of the Hannibalic war, 218 B.C., to the fall of the Republic, became more and more susceptible to the influences of Greek and Oriental thought. Lucretius (b.95 B.C.), the most brilliant exponent of Epicureanism, in one of the greatest of all Latin poems denounced *religio*[3] as the fruitful source of earthly terror and evil, and proclaimed the uselessness

[1] See on this subject article 'Roman Religion' in *E. R. E.* by Warde Fowler; to this and his other works on Roman religion I am largely indebted in what follows.

[2] So called from the *Sibyllae*, or inspired priestesses of Apollo, the most famous of which, the *Erythraean*, usually identified with the Cumaean Sibyl, was consulted by Aeneas. Cf. Virg., Aen., vi.

[3] No doubt Lucretius meant by this the superstitions of conventional religion, which was the only religion he knew.

of gods. Stoicism was less pronounced in its treatment of the old religion, but its tendency was to produce among the educated classes a detached attitude towards religion, hardly less deadly than the materialism of Lucretius. Apparently in the later days of the republic the native cults had only an antiquarian interest; the old temple buildings were crumbling into ruin; statues were filched from their shrines; the official functions of the native priesthoods became distasteful, though the office of *augur* and *pontifex maximus* were not disdained for their political prestige, and finally the Sibylline books were only consulted in the interest of a family or a party. Hence, as Warde Fowler says, 'all real life, all incentive to dutiful conduct, all unifying influence, had departed from the religion of the Romans, and all honesty of purpose had vanished from the minds of those who were entrusted with the supervision of it.'[1]

Augustus set himself to revive the State religion and to rebuild the ruined temples of the gods, but he did so from an entirely political motive. His chief aim was to secure the State's prosperity, the cause of public welfare, peace, and the fertility of crops, and he believed these objects would be achieved more effectively by keeping on good terms with the gods. On the other hand, in the Roman world there was a sense of moral evil or neglected duty towards the gods and man, reflected especially in the poetry of Virgil, whose hero, the *pius* Aeneas, expresses the most religious element of the Roman character. *Pietas* was 'not

[1] See *loc. cit.*, p. 838.

only the due performance of service to the gods and ancestors, but the sacrifice of self to the interests of the community, submission to the divine will in full confidence of ultimate success.' The prosperity of the Roman State, now an Empire, with world responsibilities, was the only ' kingdom of heaven ' that the Roman consciousness could imagine ; and consequently while the restoration of the temples, the transformation of a city built of brick into marble, the revival of the priesthoods and the building of the magnificent temple to Apollo Palatinus on a site belonging to his family, were all in a sense expressions of the beliefs of Augustus that the city ' had divine as well as human inhabitants,' it did not in the least follow that any deeper feeling towards the spiritual world was awakened, or any profound moral relationship of the soul with the unseen powers established by these reforms. Equally true was it that the religion of family life—that is, religion in its private aspects—still retained its character as a performance of certain duties of reverence to ' household gods,' such as Vesta, the spirit of the hearth-fire ; the *penates*, the spirits of the household store ; the *lares*, spirits of the cultivated fields ; the *Lar familiaris*, who was possibly the spirit of the actual site of the homestead ; and lastly the *genius*, or the spirit of masculine vigour, by which the family was perpetuated. Nevertheless, this system of religious veneration, public and domestic —more especially the latter—maintained its vogue owing to the innate Roman conservatism and love of tradition, both in Italy and the provinces, in spite

of the steadily disintegrating effect of Oriental cults. Further, it held its own alongside of emperor-worship, a vital innovation which affected the destiny of Christianity with perilous persistence.

Before, however, considering the genesis and character of emperor-worship there are features of all the pagan cults which cannot pass unnoticed; it is a feature that is often overlooked by those who judge of a faith—like modern Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions of the East—by its theoretical dogmas rather than by its ethical results. However noble the principles that find expression in the pagan cults—for example, the yearning for union with the God—however profound and even spiritual their philosophy of religion, however subtle and impressive the metaphysics, e.g., of Brahmanism, the fact remains that their doctrine has no connexion with private ethics. Certain it is that the public festivals and assemblies of the old pagan cults were often the occasions of the grossest immorality. The apologists never fail to emphasize this grievous feature. Take, for example, Tatian (b. *cir.* A.D. 120), that remarkable 'hearer' of Justin Martyr (b. *cir.* A.D. 100), 'born in the land of Assyria,' a wanderer in many lands, and observer of the horrid mysteries and bloody rites of the popular cults. He became sceptical of all religion, like Lucretius; but, unlike the latter, found the light which gave him the true conception of religion, for he stumbled on 'certain barbaric writings' (he means the sacred writings of the Christians), and proceeded as a Christian convert to write the famous extant

Oration to the Greeks. He pours contempt on Greek philosophy and its teachers, who contradict their tenets by their lives, and he never expresses sympathy with the line of thought of those apologists who find analogies between Christianity and Greek thought. With a trenchant irony and a bitter sarcasm he holds up to scorn the art and drama of the Greeks, their statues of gods and goddesses, their brutal athletes, their demon-worships, and, above all, the licentiousness and falsehood against which paganism never uttered a protest. This is not the invective begotten of mere blind prejudice or unreasoning enthusiasm, but the judgement of one who describes what he has seen, and whose natural instinct for purity[1] and simplicity of life was linked with a keen, inquiring intellect which lent individuality to his treatment of Christian dogma and practice.[2]

We have said enough to show that Christianity as a new faith, with transcendent conceptions of the divine and a new ethic, offered a direct challenge to the Greek and Oriental cults of the Empire, and to the inveterate conservatism of Rome, its pragmatic and perfunctory State religion, with its venerable system of fixed observances and festivals, public and domestic ; but the deification of the emperor in imperial times was mainly to be the deadly stumbling-block with

[1] Cf. *Orat.*, xix.

[2] He fell away from orthodox Christianity and became the head of the sect of Encratites, an ultra-ascetic group of Gnostics. See Rendel Harris's study (*Tatian : Perfection according to the Saviour* ; Rylands Library Bulletin, vol. 8, No. 1, Jan., 1924) for an interesting account and transcript of the newly discovered fragment, now identified with the treatise bearing the above title mentioned by Clement of Alexandria as Tatian's.

which for two and a half centuries it was brought into collision.

The Greek from the first conceived his gods to be in the likeness of men, and had no difficulty in believing that by intermarriage with mortal man they had produced 'heroes,' or divine men very like themselves. It was quite easy, therefore, for them to reverse the process and lift men to the rank of gods, especially if during life they were the objects of public veneration and gratitude. When the critical spirit already referred to tended still more to degrade the gods to the rank of men, it became quite common to pay divine honours to a living man ; hence Alexander the Great, the supreme conquering hero of the declining age of Greece, was readily accorded the status of deity. There never had been any difficulty in Greece about paying divine honours to the heroic dead, and consequently the dead Alexander received the same homage as he did while alive, and a vigorous cult of his memory lasted down to the times of the Roman Empire.[1]

This precedent was followed in the case of Alexander's successors, e.g. Antigonus and Demetrius. The living king was regarded as divine, and after death an official cult to his honour came into being. It may be that some of the surnames—e.g. Sōtēr (saviour), Epiphanēs (illustrious)—were the official badges of their recognized divine rank, but the term *theos* (god) appears only to have been used of the dead, not the living. Bevan

[1] I owe the facts of this and the following paragraph to Bevan, art. 'Deification' (Greek and Roman), *E. R. E.*

adduces evidence to show that the practice was not confined to Greek kings. To the heads of Eastern dynasties (e.g. Bactria, Parthia, &c.) the title 'god' was also applied. Nor was the practice confined to kings; heroes, athletes, and philosophers were hallowed as gods, and guilds formed in their honour. When the Greeks submitted to Rome, Rome (*Roma dea*) became a new goddess, and temples were erected to her honour, while Roman governors and generals received divine honours. The worship of the dead Julius Caesar set the precedent for the empire. He became *divus Julius* (or Καῖσαρ ὁ Θεός). The first emperor was designated *Augustus* (Greek *Sebastos*), without having absolute divinity ascribed to him in his lifetime. Temples were built to his honour in the provinces, but it is significant that they were consecrated to 'Rome and Augustus.' These first appear in Asia Minor, e.g. in Pergamum and Nicomedeia and Ancyra; but the practice spread to the West, and we find such temples at *Lugdunum* (Lyons) and *oppidum Ubiorum* (Cologne). These temples were erected during the lifetime of Augustus, but in Rome it was not permissible to worship him while living except in the form of the *Genius Augusti*, an official restriction showing a discreet accommodation to the old order. On his death he became *divus* by a decree of the Senate, and could be worshipped without restraint. 'Tiberius,' says Bevan, 'followed his predecessor in restraining the divine honour offered to himself. It is only due to his resolution that we do not to-day say "Tibery" for September or October, as we say "July" and

"August" in the memory of the first two *divi*.' Neither to him nor his mad successor Caligula, who claimed every divine form of honour in his lifetime, did the Senate accord the title *divus* after death. But Claudius (41–53) after death received the title, and it now became the normal title for every deceased emperor. A reigning emperor might have a temple erected for his cult, but this was in the provinces. Rome, as a rule, discountenanced the worship of the living emperor. It is noteworthy that both Nero and Domitian—the two earliest of the notorious persecutors of Christianity—demanded divine honours during their lifetime. Aurelian (A.D. 270–275) had himself designated *dominus et deus*, and Diocletian, who was a sort of sultan and caliph in one, and the last great persecutor of the faith, demanded prostration from those who approached him, as the outward mark of veneration to his divinity. Even after the triumph of the faith, the term *divus* lingered on for centuries as a term of honour for the deceased emperor.

If we have discussed this phase of State religion at undue length, our excuse must be that it is essential to understand how it came about that the refusal of the Christian to pay worship either to a living or a dead emperor was regarded as an act of treason (*maiestas*). In those provinces where the Christians had increased in numbers the rule was insisted on, and the Christian who refused to throw incense on the altar or to offer a libation of wine, or otherwise to show respect to the gods, was usually a doomed man. The Christian citizen who did not participate in the

festivals of the gods, or in the city cults, or become a member in any of the convivial societies of *cultores* or emperor-worshippers, was marked down as a suspect, and regarded as guilty of anti-social pursuits and aloofness. How he stood the test will be seen hereafter.

We have always to remember that we owe to Rome the great word 'religion.' The best features in the Roman character were *pietas* and *gravitas*; both were aspects of *virtus*, the root idea of which is manliness, the former implying a spirit of dutifulness which regarded the claims of authority, human and divine, national and domestic, and the latter that seriousness of character and outward demeanour which co-exists with, and is inspired by, the sense of duty—the self-respect begotten of habits of obedience and fidelity and also regard for the opinion and feelings of equals. 'Equals,' let it be noted; for the Roman had a lofty unconcern for subordinates. If Virgil typifies the ideal Roman character, the younger Pliny, as a man of affairs as well as of letters, may be said to exemplify both its strength and weakness. His relationship with the Emperor Trajan, whose *legatus* he was in Bithynia (A.D. 111), is one of loyalty and respect. His correspondence with the emperor shows an admirable regard for Trajan's authority and a keen desire to acquit himself worthily in his responsibilities, which have assumed unexpected complexity in the problem raised by the Christians. But he shows the weakness of the Roman character in a lack of insight into the finer elements of human nature,

and a certain hardness which brooks no deviation from the regulations of the State, whatever may be the extenuating circumstances. He has reports of their moral life, but to him there can be no morality when the result is the refusal to pay religious honour to the emperor; it is only 'inflexible obstinacy.' The Christian who declined to offer prayer to Trajan's *imago* with incense and libation could not escape condemnation. Incidentally, Pliny is troubled because whole districts, villages, and towns are infected by the *superstitionis istius contagio*; and the temples of god, festivals, and sacrifices are neglected. 'Hence,' he remarks, 'it is easy to imagine where the remedy is to be applied, if in this crowd there is room for repentance.'[1] The Christian apologists, on the other hand, were on their part blind to the better elements of the Roman character, because they argued that nothing good was possible where the worship of the gods of Greece and Rome is observed. In the nature of things Christianity was at that stage incapable of arguing, after the modern fashion, from the fact of religion to its progress in history and the ascent from primitive conceptions of the deity to higher and nobler ones. The idea of a consummation of religion in Christianity is expressed in the writings of Justin Martyr and the Greek theologians, but a writer like Tertullian is more concerned in exposing the weaknesses of the classic cults than, for example, in dwelling on the fundamental principles of Roman religion, its recognition of the divine authority in the life of the

[1] Pliny, Ep. 96.

State and the family, or the specifically Roman virtues of obedience, dutifulness, and self-respect, as involved in the *patria potestas*. He was incapable of seeing that the finer aspects of conventional religion were, like the Jewish law, *paedagogic*, in preparing the way for the Christian scheme of morality and faith. We have outlived the mentality of Tertullian, for the Christian missionary in China is able to appeal to the ethical teaching of Confucius, with its underlying conception of obedience—filial obedience and reverence for paternal authority—in order to proclaim the nobler doctrine of the Fatherhood of God from which 'every fatherhood in heaven and earth is named.'[1]

[1] Cf. Eph. iii. 15.

III

REDEEMER-GODS AND GNOSTICISM

CHRISTIANITY, as we have noted, came into a world in which the ideas of purification and redemption had already become familiar owing to the vogue of mystery-cults from the East. These mystery religions have received very close investigation from Continental scholars such as Reitzenstein, Rohde, and Cumont, and English scholars such as Professor H. A. A. Kennedy, Percy Gardner, and more recently by the late Dr. Hastings Rashdall. Their general character is now so well known that a brief statement will suffice. The religion of Greece, although idealist at heart, had failed to satisfy the spiritual needs of the soul, and while philosophy engaged the interest of the thoughtful classes, average humanity was more attracted by the conception of a mystic fellowship with God, by rites of initiation such as were practised in the Eleusinian mysteries, and by the promise of inward purification and peace. Hence the cults which came from the Orient, e.g. the worship of Dionysus, of Cybele, the *Magna Mater* of Phrygia, and of Attis, from Asia Minor ; of Mithra, the sun-god of Persia ; of the Egyptian Serapis (or Osiris) and Isis, his wife and sister, made a powerful appeal to the

universal instinct for soul-purification and the assurance of immortality. The two chief rivals to Christianity were the Egyptian cult of Isis, which lingered on till the close of the fourth century, and the cult of Mithra, the sun-god, which made rapid strides during the second half of the third century, when Christianity suffered its severest ordeal in the deadly persecutions under Decius and Diocletian. Both cults had their rites of initiation, but the *taurobolium* of Mithra, whereby the initiate was sprinkled by the blood of a slaughtered bull and was 'reborn into eternity,' had a deeper ethical influence than the ritual of Isis, whose mysteries were associated, at least in the earlier stage of their evolution, with gross laxity of morals.[1] Nevertheless, even in the cult of Isis, where bodily cleanliness was at first the main object of the devotee, the sensual aspects gradually disappeared, and a purity of soul or mystic chastity was proclaimed by the Isiac priesthoods as the end of their sacramental fellowship, while the belief in the resurrection of Osiris, who had been done to death by the powers of evil and received a new spiritual body at the hands of his spouse Isis, prepared the way for the conviction of immortality. Undoubtedly these cults had an influence on Christian thought and ritual, and an even greater influence in the shaping of that subtle amalgam of Oriental concepts and Christian teaching which is known as Gnosticism.

But while Christianity was in accord with the conception of a Redeemer or Saviour, who had power

[1] Cf. Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Aurelius*, p. 82, fn. reff.

to deliver the soul from the demonic agencies of evil and the burden of moral failure, it absolutely separated itself from the magical and mechanical ritual which in the mystery-cults was essential in order to secure the spiritual blessings which the initiate sought. The sacraments of Christianity were not means to an end, but symbolic renderings or representations of the inward spiritual grace already assured to the believer by an act of faith. The attempt to make out Christianity as itself a rival mystery religion, made by scholars such as Kirsopp Lake and Loisy, has not proved to be convincing to the majority of scholars. Baptism and eucharist in the New Testament are symbols by means of which the humblest mind could realize and register the processes of his inward life. No doubt many of the converts from paganism would regard Christianity as a cult with 'mysteries' of its own, and Christian teachers would not at first be concerned to condemn the sense of analogy; but no Christian of ordinary intelligence, if properly trained in the doctrine of the Church, would be likely to import a magical or semi-physical significance into baptism and eucharist. Let it here be admitted that personal predilection will always affect the critical estimate of historical evidence, and that a mind which is in sympathy with the 'Catholic' view of the origin of the Church and its sacraments will naturally incline to the belief that Christianity from the first gave greater prominence to external or liturgical values than will be allowed by a mind susceptible rather to the mystical aspects of religion. Here, as elsewhere,

we are thrown back on degrees of probability in the conclusions which students of different temperaments draw from the same historical data. Certain it is that it was impossible for early Christians to remain wholly unaffected by these Oriental worships, with their magic, spectacular ritual, and barbaric formulae. It was a world upon which streamed the most fantastic medley of influences drawn from Chaldean astronomy, occult sects, Babylonian myths, Orphism, and Persian dualism. It would have been a miracle if the new faith had not absorbed some of these elements. It certainly did not abandon the conception of demonic forces or beings—'principalities and powers,' 'world-rulers of this darkness'—occupying a world intermediate between the soul and God. But such ideas are never vital; they are incidental; and for the moment it is sufficient to insist that Christianity was saved from magic and cabbalistic formulae by the splendid directness and simplicity of its doctrine. 'Jesus is Lord,' was the creed of the Pauline Christian, and he needed no other. His sacraments were symbols of the perpetual presence of the undying love of an historic Redeemer, who had actually appeared in this material universe and been made in the likeness of man. His 'citizenship' was in heaven, but his feet were on solid earth. He was not reborn, like the Mithraist, for only twenty years, but for ever. While engaged in the common tasks of life, in the field, the city, the army, he could enjoy a mystic fellowship with a Saviour, ever-present and ever-living, that nothing could destroy.

It is convenient, however, while keeping in mind this impact of Hellenistic occultism, philosophy, and mysticism upon early Christianity, to realize that while Christianity absorbed, it also repelled. It challenged directly the premisses of that powerful system of thought known as Gnosticism which in the second century gravely threatened the validity of certain conceptions of God and His relation to the world, conceptions which were vital to the faith of Christ. The principle of the *opus operatum* lay at the root of the mystery-ritual; man had to *do* something in order to get peace; he had to engage in a ritual or process of initiation in order to find salvation. To this Christianity opposed the principle of faith (*pistis*) as a faculty of the inner consciousness, without which no external rite could be efficacious. Gnosticism, on the other hand, was based on the idea that faith (*pistis*) was inferior to knowledge (*gnosis*), and by that distinction showed its real character as an esoteric cult, or at least a system which produced an eclectic rendering of Christianity. It was Christianity in an intellectualized or Hellenized form, a form which might satisfy the needs, not of common humanity, but of superior minds deeply influenced by the concepts of Oriental philosophy, and convinced that their Orientalized version of Christianity alone was sound. What were its underlying principles?

Founded on a basic idea which Oriental religious thought has ever cherished and retains to this day, viz. that there can be no contact between the Supreme Being and matter, Gnosticism is really the offspring

of the ' syncretism ' or fusing of many forms of religious and philosophic thought, drawn from Babylonia, Persia, and Egypt, which arose with the conquest of Asia by Alexander. Even Judaism did not escape the effect of this intermingling of Greek and Oriental philosophy and religion. Judaism, self-contained and isolated as it was in spirit, absorbed alien elements ; as witness the writings of that great Jewish thinker Philo (b. 20 B.C.), who sought to harmonize the thought of Plato and the Stoics with the monotheism of the Pentateuch. In the tenets of early Christianity, Gnosticism was to find a more fruitful soil than Judaism for developing its characteristic thought. Early Christianity, as we have already noted, in order to make itself intelligible to its environment, was almost compelled to use the terms and imagery of pagan cults ; but the time was to come when this alliance was perceived to be deadly and a breach ensued. On the other hand, Gnosticism easily absorbed Christian elements into its system. The idea of divine revelation, the craving for purity and redemption, the person of Christ, Saviour and Redeemer, and the opportunity for allegorical and mystic interpretation offered by early Christian writings—e.g. the Fourth Gospel, which could easily be read as a Gnostic pamphlet—appealed with peculiar force to a system of thought always fluid and sympathetic with the latest form of spiritual *gnosis*. Speaking generally, the idea of *redemption* lies at the root of all forms of Gnostic thought. First of all, it is a deliverance from a material universe conceived as essentially evil and

sensual. Pure spirit has become inextricably allied with impure matter, and the antagonism between these alien elements must be resolved. Secondly, this world was a sphere of necessity (*heimarmenē*) swayed by astral powers, *archontes* or *kosmokratores*[1]; the soul could only attain freedom by an ascent through the region dominated by these demonic powers into a spiritual world. The aim of Gnosticism was to supply the initiate with a kind of passport to salvation by means of charms and magic, external signs or symbols of a *gnosis* which was to effect the union of the soul with the *Pleroma* or fullness of the Divine Being. Furthermore, this redemption would only be achieved by the elect few. The 'spiritual' man (*pneumatikos*) was sharply opposed to the earthly man (*chöikos* or *psychikos*), for whom God was not responsible; the spiritual man alone could attain the blessedness of this supernal union. The redemption was effected by means of a ritual similar to those of other mystery-cults, with slight differences in the various Gnostic sects, but chiefly lustrations or baptisms, the memorizing of secret signs and names of angels, the wearing of amulets in the form of rings and gems engraved with mystic devices, the tattooing of symbols on the body, and so forth.

The chasm between the Father or Fount of Light and the world of darkness, between the Supreme and Unknowable God and the world of matter, could only be bridged by a series of existences named *aeons* in the teaching of Valentinus, the founder of a Gnostic sect

[1] The term 'world-rulers' used by St. Paul in Eph. vi. 12.

in the first half of the second century. These *aeons* in their totality made up the *Pleroma*. They were conceived as emanating in a descending scale, the latest in this scheme of fallen beings being *Sophia*, an Old Testament conception which has affinity with the Phrygian Cybele, the Egyptian Isis, and the Babylonian Ishtar. *Sophia* (or Wisdom) has sunk into the abyss of Darkness, and as such is an intermediary in the redemptive process, needing redemption herself, but also assisting in the redemptive process. Her fall results in the Creation, which is conceived to be the work of *Demiourgos*, her son. A Deliverer or Sōtēr (Saviour) is required to restore the fallen Sophia to the Pleroma. Sōtēr, let us add, is a pre-Christian idea,[1] with analogues in the mystery-cults. But it was Christian Gnosticism that identified the mythical Redeemer with Christ. And at this point we reach the goal of our inquiry ; for now arises the challenge which Christianity offered to its dangerous rival. The Gnostics conceived the Redeemer as uniting Himself with the man Jesus at birth (or, according to other versions, at the age of twelve or at his baptism) ; but before his crucifixion the Divine Being, being incapable of suffering, disunites Himself from Jesus.

It is quite clear that the theology of Gnosticism is ' the baseless fabric ' of a dream. All its ' aeons ' or emanations are abstractions, and its Redeemer, or

[1] Cf. E. Bevan's essay, ' The Gnostic Redeemer,' in his *Hellenism and Christianity*. He shows that there is no Hellenistic parallel for the Christian Redeemer ' who embodied a supreme act of divine love and voluntary humiliation,' although ' the way the Gnostic worked out his conception of the Saviour involved a large borrowing from Hellenistic theology.'

Sōtēr, a mere figment of the imagination. The attempt of Gnosticism to connect its Redeemer with Jesus empties Christianity of its vital content; the man Jesus becomes a phantasm, or *dokētēs*—only an apparent body—an idea which gives its name to the first heresy of Christianity called Doketism. Doketism as a theory of our Lord's humanity flows, therefore, directly from the current dualistic philosophy, which combined itself with Christianity to produce Christian Gnosticism, and later on Manichaeism (or the doctrine of Mâni), which influenced Augustine so powerfully in his early life. The references to this heresy are frequent in the patristic writings of the early centuries. Its best-known exponent is Marcion (*flor.* A.D. 130–140), whose theory of Christ is that in no sense was He a man; there was no real body, no real humanity; His suffering and death were only phantasmal or apparent.

The ethics of Gnosticism were equally based on its inherent dualism, and produced diametrically opposed schemes of practice. Asceticism was a rule of conduct; but libertinism as an expression of the soul's independence of the material world was defensible. Hence such antinomian sects as the Carpocratian, Nicolaitans, and Cainites, who regarded Cain, Esau, Korah, and Judas as apostles of freedom, and such ascetic sects as the Encratites of Tatian, or the adherents of Hierakas (a follower of Origen), called Hierakites, belonging to the third century.

The relation of Christianity to this powerful rival is a study of extraordinary interest. Condemnation of its leading tenets is found in the writings of St. Paul,

although he combats in the Epistle to the Colossians only a Judaistic form of Gnosticism ; it is found also in the Pastoral Epistles, in the Apocalypse, and the Gospel and Epistles of St. John. The theory of Doketism in relation to our Lord's person is singled out for condemnation, but other theories of Gnosticism—its denial of the Resurrection, its ethical inconsistency, and its differentiation of the Creator from the Supreme God—are likewise rejected. There appears to have been a period—early in the second century—when a *rapprochement* with Gnosticism might have been established. Professor E. R. Scott[1] points out that 'it is the peculiarity of the Fourth Gospel that its underlying polemic against the Gnostic teaching is combined with a certain sympathy.' It is generally assumed that the Fourth Gospel took shape, even if it did not reach its *final* shape, about this time. But the fusion was not destined to be accomplished. Ignatius, among the apostolic Fathers, utters a vehement polemic against doketic views of Christ, and may have saved the Church by his attitude. He is followed by others ; e.g. Irenaeus, whose treatise *Against Heresies* is a mine of information about the various Gnostic sects. Origen's treatise *Contra Celsum*[2] shows clearly that Celsus regarded Gnosticism as a phase of Christianity. The danger of Christianity becoming a sect of Judaism was overpast, but the danger of absorption by the syncretist religions was equally real, and though it was eventually surmounted, the conflict with its rival, at length regarded as a foe, left traces on

[1] See Art. 'Gnosticism' in *E. R. E.*

[2] See *infra*, p. 122.

Christianity which have sometimes been overlooked. Gnosticism fostered the spirit of mysticism, it gave an impetus to doctrinal thought, it produced a reasoned critique of the Scriptures, and through Marcion helped to produce a New Testament canon; it even created a hymnology, upon which the Church drew, adapting the borrowed lyrics to its own service. The *Odes of Solomon* may be an example of this tendency.[1] But there were other influences not so beneficial. It deepened the tendencies of the Church to asceticism, to a rigid sacramentarianism which subordinated spiritual symbolic values to a hard dogmatism and to a narrow ecclesiasticism. Such were the mingled fruits of a controversy between the faith and a system of thought whose basic theories it rejected from the first. The victory which Christianity won was a triumph for the first principles of the faith, and its effects have endured to this day.

[1] See *E. R. E.*, art. 'Hymns (Greek Christian),' vol. vii., p. 6. Students of modern music will be reminded that the words of G. Holst's now familiar 'Hymn of Jesus' are taken from the Christian Gnostic *Acts of John*.

IV

CURRENT PHILOSOPHY

ANY discussion of the phases of philosophic thought which confronted Christianity in the early empire would be incomplete without a reference to Stoicism. St. Paul's dramatic encounter with the philosophers at Athens is the first historic example of the contact of the new faith with the two schools of philosophy—Stoicism and Epicureanism—which succeeded in creating a larger popular interest than the lofty metaphysics of Aristotle and Plato. The practical or ethical results of wisdom tended more and more to capture the sympathy of mankind, and common sense demands that a knowledge of the highest good should find expression in a good life. Hence the conception of a 'passionless sage' formulated by the philosophy of the painted *Stoa*, or porch, in which the tenets of Zeno (*flor. cir.* 250 B.C.) and Chrysippus (b. 280 B.C.)—founders of the school—were taught. It is the type of mind which is unaffected by the emotions caused by pain or other experiences which awake hope or fear or joy. The sage could not pronounce these states of consciousness to be either good or bad; they were merely 'indifferent.' If the Stoic failed to realize his ideal, he clung to it with praiseworthy loyalty. The

untroubled life (*ataraxia*) is the goal of existence. With this conception the rival system of Epicurus (b. 342 B.C.) was in cordial agreement; but in the scheme of wisdom he gave the first place to pleasure (*hēdonē*). Pleasure was the highest good, as pain was the greatest evil. Not that the pleasure of Epicurus proclaimed as an object of desire was mere vulgar sensuality; on the contrary, he conceived it chiefly as a mental condition, arising from the removal of pain in either body or mind. Such general well-being or happiness could be achieved by the man who reduced existence to the simplest needs.

In both schemes of life there is an attractive and even noble element, which brings them into close approximation with the ethics of Christianity. It is not necessary to dwell on the famous Stoic triumvirate, subject of so many treatises: Seneca (b. *cir.* 45 B.C.) the courtier, *littérateur*, and tutor of Nero; Epictetus the slave (who flourished in the reign of Domitian); and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. They have been idealized as 'seekers after God'; certainly there is in the extant writings of the crippled slave of Nicopolis and of the emperor an almost religious exaltation which lifts them above the level of the ordinary thinkers of paganism. Roman Stoicism shows how near the best spirits of the age came to the great secret. If it be asked why they did not reach it, the answer is given in St. Paul's speech before the court of the Areopagus. Ancient thought had arrived at the conception of the unity and fatherhood of God. St. Paul quotes a phrase which crystallizes this belief:

'For we are all His offspring.' It comes from the glowing hymn to Zeus by the Stoic Cleanthes[1] (b. *circ.* 300 B.C.), who wrought his philosophy into verse, just as Lucretius on more spacious lines gave a majestic exposition of Epicureanism in his *De rerum natura*. The fervour with which Cleanthes invokes 'Nature's great king, through endless years the same,' is paralleled by Epicurus' words, which proclaim 'the incorruptibility and blessedness of God according to the notion of a God commonly held among men'[2]; but in the same breath he condemns the impiety of those who do away with the gods of the multitude.

The apostle indicates the vital defect of this conception when he denounces the inconsistency of idols and images of the invisible God, and further asserts that the idol-worshippers are really ignorant of God. To the Stoic God and the universe were one; to the Epicureans God or the hierarchy of gods enjoyed that undisturbed and passionless peace which it was the object of the wise man to acquire on earth, inhabiting

> The lucid interspace of world and world
> Where never creeps a cloud or moves a wind,
> Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar
> Their sacred, everlasting calm.

Therefore during the centuries succeeding the first encounter of St. Paul with ancient thought, Christianity was to challenge the fundamental concepts of

[1] Or possibly from Aratus, a poet of Soli (in Cilicia), who wrote in the third century before Christ an astronomical poem called *Phaenomena*. The passage from which the quotation may be taken refers to Zeus: 'His children are we.'

[2] Epicurus ap. Diog. Laert., x. 123: ἄφθαρτον καὶ μάκαριον ὡς ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ νόησις ὑπεγράφη, Ritter & Preller, *Hist. Phil.*, p. 355.

pagan theology. It was, indeed, a real gain that Seneca should regard God as a formative energy or germinative logos (or reason) interpenetrating the universe; that Epictetus should speak of God as a helper in the conflict of duty and of His will as law; that Marcus Aurelius, in a sublime and oft-quoted apostrophe, should rise to the conception of the universe as a city of God; but the fact remains that no Stoic, however lofty and disinterested, had arrived at the thought of a personal deity who transcends while He was truly immanent in the works of nature. The Stoic theism is at heart a deism which left the soul a stranger on the earth, or, as Hadrian puts it in his haunting phrase, 'A soft little fluttering thing,'[1] like a bird that roams over a homeless sea. St. Paul knew what Stoicism was; he was aware of its conception of 'law,' God's universal law; he realized that men had grasped the thought of God from the evidence of the visible universe; but he fearlessly declared that they had 'changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man.'[2] He knew also, and preached, a doctrine, of 'self-sufficiency' (*autarkeia*), like the 'wise passiveness' with which Wordsworth came to the understanding of Nature and received its message; but he made it clear that his attitude to the ills of life, like moral rectitude itself, arises from faith and love, faith in and love towards a human-divine Saviour, who in living our life under a form of humiliation has declared the essential unity of God and humanity. The will of God is no longer an

[1] *Animula vagula blandula.* [2] Cf. Rom. i. 23.

iron necessity inflicted upon us by the unalterable course of Nature; but the will of a Father of our spirits, who sees fit to place His children in a sphere of discipline as an education for a higher destiny.[1]

The difference may be illustrated by the Stoic and Christian conception of suicide. Life to the Stoic is not a good, and to put an end to it in order to escape pain, mutilation, and the rest is not dishonourable, if Nature and providence point to it as a solution of a present distress. The Christian,[2] on the other hand, has an inherent sense of the sanctity of life, his own as well as his neighbour's. The casuist, of course, may argue that suicide under certain conditions is defensible; but the Christian will leave his course to be determined by God and not usurp the function of God by a deliberate, self-inflicted death. Both Stoic and Epicurean were materialist in their conception of the universe; even the animating principle, call it either Nature (φύσις) or God, can hardly be dissociated from, or regarded as independent of, organic processes. However exalted and ethical their conception of the deity, however insistently they urged the duty of living 'conformably with Nature,'[3] the great Stoic thinkers leave the soul confronted with an abstraction; and though they endow the soul with volition, regarding it as a fragment of the divine reason of the universe, this

[1] 'It works together with us for good if we love God' (Rom. viii. 28).

[2] Cf. Hor. Od. i. 12, 35: *Catonis nobile letum*, of the younger Cato's suicide after the victory of Julius Caesar at Thapsus in 46 B.C.

[3] There is a remarkable similarity, as Schweitzer (*Christianity and the Religions of the World*) has pointed out, between the Stoic philosophy of Nature and that of Chinese religious thinking, which in its noblest form proclaims that meditation on the nature of the universe leads to the religion of love. See pp. 54 f.

view is logically inconsistent with their conception of the universe as a system of causality. Above all, they hold out no hope of immortality for the individual; if soul survives the death of the body, it merges in 'the general whole.' And yet Stoicism was the chief spiritual influence in the pagan world at the beginning of the Christian era. 'Under the early empire all good administrators were men imbued with Stoic principles, and it is not too much to say that through Stoicism the Roman world-empire found itself a soul.'[1]

It is therefore remarkable that as a spiritual force Stoicism ceased to be influential by the end of the second century. Perhaps this was due to the weakening of the old paganism, to which the Roman Stoics, haters of convention though they were, conformed; more likely it was owing to the new value and meaning attached in Christian teaching to personality, both of God and man, and to the truth of immortality. The connexion between St. Paul and Stoicism revealed in the apostle's phraseology and ideas is explained by his early association with Stoic teachers. The influence of Stoic speculation is clearly recognizable in the writings of the apologists and the Alexandrian theologians. Stoicism, indeed, left an abiding mark on Christian thought, which developed its dogmas on the scientific lines of the Stoic text-books. It may be said, indeed, to have been an *evangelica praeparatio*, educating thoughtful minds for Christ and preparing the way for His larger wisdom.

Platonism as a metaphysical system had never lost

[1] Cf. art. E. K. Arnold, 'Stoicism,' *E. R. E.*, ii. 865 f.

its hold on the intellectual life of the Hellenistic world, but it was to experience a veritable renaissance towards the end of the third century. Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine in turn were deeply influenced by Platonic thought; Clement and Origen created a Christian theology in which they sought to incorporate the nobler elements of both Stoicism and Platonism. Alexandrian theology has left a permanent impress, the value of which is variously estimated, upon the doctrine of the Church. But contrasted with the constructive thought of Clement and Origen we have the aggressive Platonism of the rationalist Celsus, the most serious and able opponent of Christianity in the early centuries. His attack was deemed of such weight that Origen, after the death of Celsus, thought fit to produce in the *Contra Celsum*[1] an elaborate reply to the famous polemic entitled the *True Word*, which in the later years of Marcus Aurelius (178–180) Celsus had published. But about the very time that Origen had produced his apologetic, Plotinus had reached Rome to preach a new Platonism, a religion of contemplation whereby the soul, emancipated from the phenomenal world, was to seek union with the Ineffable One or World-Soul. His *Enneades* is the classic of pagan mysticism and transcendentalism, and as such still evokes the admiration of the thoughtful student of philosophy. In this treatise he attacked the Gnostics for their disparagement of the world and its Creator,

[1] Cf. for a brief account of this work the writer's *Introduction to Early Church History*, pp. 113–8 (hereafter referred to as *I. E. C. H.*), and Glover, *Conflict of Religions*, chap. viii., for a vivid analysis of the *True Word* and the mentality of its author.

their neglect of ethics and their contempt of the gods. Plotinus and his pupil Porphyry, in spite of the loftiness of their metaphysics make a resolute attempt to re-establish pagan religion and to revitalize the Olympian gods. Porphyry was a Pythagorean preaching asceticism, the simple life, and emancipation from the world in order to gain *assimilation to God.* Iamblichus carried on the tradition in the age of Constantine, and was to win the praise of that arch-Hellenist Julian for his superstitious zeal in the interests of the old idolatry. In a word, we have in Neo-Platonism the last striking phase of paganism, when it was desperately engaged in the task of self-preservation. In the most fascinating and spiritual form of Platonic thought, and by means of an esoteric cult, the system sought to unite with the time-honoured polytheism of classic ages a profound and mystic conception of God.

V

DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE EARLY EMPIRE

It is by no means easy to present an evenly proportioned and balanced view of the conditions of society within the empire when Christianity first commanded attention as a new moral force, affecting not only the individual but the social fabric. The truth, so far as it can be ascertained from our available authorities, lies midway between an overdrawn picture of universal decadence and an essentially tolerant view of Graeco-Roman civilization as co-existing with at least two centuries of imperial rule, when peace prevailed throughout the world and created a general prosperity unsurpassed by any other period in history. It is clear enough that the catalogue of sins presented by the apostle Paul in his indictment of pagan morals is true not of one period of Christian history only; its main features may be paralleled in the Middle Ages and in the modern world, in which the spirit of paganism still to so large an extent prevails. You can no more infer from the disgusting realism of the *Satyricon* of Petronius an exceptional laxity of public morals than from the writings of Benvenuto Cellini or Zola you can prove the essential rottenness

of mediaeval morals in Italy or the later nineteenth-century society of north-western Europe; or even—to go further back—is it just to base an opinion of the general domestic morality in the England of the Restoration Age on the moral tone of the Restoration dramatists. Too deeply to underline the direct and indirect evidence of satirist, historian, poet, epigrammatist, letter-writer, essayist, biographer, miscellanist, and archaeologist were a mistake. Much that is valuable concerning the state of social order can be gleaned from Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Persius, and Apuleius, from Tacitus and Seneca, from Martial and Petronius, the younger Pliny, Plutarch, Lucian, and in the later fourth century Macrobius; but in each case the evidence has to be estimated by such factors as the writer's motive, personality, predilections, and prejudices, the exigencies of literary form, and other considerations. From the other side, in the same way, the statements of a Tertullian, or other more restrained Christian apologists, have to be carefully scrutinized. Gibbon, with all his great gifts as an historian, shows at every turn that no absolutely impartial view of social morality in the empire can be expected from a mind constitutionally prejudiced in favour of the ancient order. After the reign of Augustus the stability of the empire for eighty years was grievously undermined by a series of unworthy emperors, who, with the exception of Vespasian, brought the purple into discredit. The names of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, and Domitian remind us of the black shadow that rested upon Rome during this period. But with the

accession of Trajan the sky brightened. Gibbon's glowing panegyric of the age of the Antonines, based on the character of the great emperors Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, and 'the general happiness of which they were the authors,' might suggest a corresponding elevation of social morality, but as a matter of fact the root-evils of Roman society remained untouched, and even Marcus Aurelius failed to perceive that the brutal persecutions of the Christians at Lyons during his reign was a terrible comment on the moral obliquity of the public vision in relation to the claims of common humanity and of social duty.

Every one, of course, wants to know what sort of life was lived by the average Roman citizen, not only in Rome, but in the other great cities of the empire, in Alexandria and Antioch as well as in smaller towns and communities of the Mediterranean world. How did he map out the day? What kind of a house did he live in? What were his interests outside his work? What was his relation to his home and his family and the State? Was he educated? If so, what sort of an education had he received? What were the labour conditions of his day? What was the extent of his moral and religious outlook? What were his amusements? And so forth. Now, we can form a tolerably clear conception of the life of the upper classes in Rome, the members of the Senatorial order, and the nobler families of Rome, and the class just beneath them, the 'knights' (*equites*) or capitalist middle class; we know, too, what the life of the slave was at the opposite

social pole. But we have comparatively slight information about the social condition of the lower ranges of society. There was a great world of undistinguished humanity lying between the *honestiores*—the higher bred or more socially important citizens of wealth and education who held office in the empire and army (including also the middle class of the 'knights,' tax-gatherers, bankers, and merchants)—and the order of slaves beyond the pale and excluded from the privileges of citizenship. We may speak of this vast intermediate constituency of the lower orders as unprivileged; but technically, they were members of the body of *cives Romani*, and enjoyed as citizens the privilege of security in person and property. What we call the professional classes—artists, doctors, lawyers, schoolmasters—were socially on a level with the tradesmen and artisans, such as butcher, baker, carpenter, mason, and potter; while below ranged, in a descending social importance, clerks, agricultural labourers, ploughmen, herdsmen, inn-keepers, wine-sellers, fullers, &c.; finally there was the rabble, or the city loafers, such as were to be found in every good-sized city in the empire. No longer did this crowd exercise their rights as under the old republic; they neither elected nor legislated. These functions now belonged to the emperor and the Senate, which was roughly a House of Lords, to which the qualification of birth and heredity ensured admission, though the position was open to any person of sufficient wealth who might nominate or recommend himself and thereupon be accepted on the emperor's authority. Thus we

have the emperor, the Senate, and the people of Rome; that is the whole body of citizens. A third of the population of Rome, which may be placed about Nero's time at 750,000, was the non-citizen slave class. Of the remainder almost another third consisted of poor citizens, who stood on a list to receive a monthly corn-allowance of six or seven bushels; it does not follow that they were unemployed, but their name was on a list to receive the State 'dole.' Here was a patent source of social demoralization—a vast crowd nominally citizens, but to a considerable extent dependent on public bounty. Below them were the loafers and the professional beggars, who had a stand on the Appian Way at a point where the traffic could only move slowly owing to the rise in the ground. Into this large class of the less opulent and what we may call the lower order of citizenship (*tenuiores*) come the freedmen, former slaves who had received manumission, and who, like the vulgar Trimalchio of Petronius, might be persons of considerable means.

The life of a slave was not necessarily unhappy; in itself it was preferable and more ethically satisfactory than the life of a city loafer or a professional beggar. There were, of course, brutal masters who made their slaves' life a hell; but a slave in a house where perhaps ten slaves were kept might occupy the position of librarian, architect, accountant, steward, or even physician. He might belong to any nationality; he might be an Egyptian, Cappadocian, German, Thracian, Greek, or Jew. He might further be completely happy; but he was *not free*; power for life and

death resided in his master's hands. He might have become a slave by belonging to the slave order or by having been purchased in the open market at a price ranging from £20 to £50. But if he were educated—and many of them were intellectually the superiors of their masters—he might have fetched many hundreds. He received 'tips' from guests of the master and his friends, daily rations, and a small sum of money. If he was a saving man he could purchase his freedom with his master's consent.[1] The *servus* then became a *libertus* (or *libertinus*), and the world lay before him, even the highest offices of State. Sometimes a favourite slave, like the cultivated Zosimus of Pliny, received his freedom as a reward for faithful service, and as a mark of respect for what amounted to a real friendship between master and man.

Such was roughly the social order of Rome; and, generally speaking, upon a smaller scale, and with certain inevitable variations, life in the capital reproduced itself elsewhere. It was not from the wealthy and educated classes that Christianity was in the first instance to win the majority of its converts. The distinction that separated the patrician and the tradesman, the wealthy and the poor and all grades of the citizen class from the slaves, was a source of social degradation and unrest. The careless luxury and lax morality of the higher orders in Rome form the materials for the unrelieved pessimism of Tacitus, and

[1] Note here, some of the forms of manumission may have influenced the phraseology of Paul, whose familiarity with the slave system is clearly shown everywhere in his epistles.

the bitter and indignant satire of Juvenal. Though both lived to see the black days of the early empire vanish in the golden promise of a new order under Trajan and his immediate successors, both writers, from the standpoint of the old Roman *gravitas* and its tradition of public integrity, viewed with undisguised concern and perhaps exaggerated the extent of the social evils—ethical and economic—which threatened the heart of the empire. But the old morality was powerless to heal these evils. No critic of public morals was able as yet to see in Christianity a new hope for the world. Tacitus in a few mordant phrases dismisses it as an Oriental superstition. The younger Pliny, with all his genial culture as lover of letters and the simplicities and beauties of Nature, and his good qualities as a generous, serious-minded, and faithful public servant, failed to apprehend the significance of the rapid advance of what appeared to be the perverse and wanton superstition of a fanatically obstinate sect. The literature of the faith was written in Greek, and for the most part circulated in Christian communities. 'Even,' says Dr. J. A. Mackail, 'in the middle of the second century the Church of Rome mainly consisted of people who could barely speak or write Latin.' It was not till the age of the Antonines that the first Latin apologists were born, Minucius Felix, who cultivated the classical tradition of Latin style, and Tertullian, who wrote Latin in the new African manner. It was Tertullian who really opened the history of Latin Christianity, and set going a propaganda in literature which aroused the public opinion of the

empire to a deeper interest in the remarkable moral force which was at work in their midst.

There are one or two features in Roman social life which ought not to be overlooked. Domestic life was based on the *patria potestas*, the absolute power of the father over his offspring. This power could be exercised over his son, even when the latter was grown up and married. The exposure or sale of a child was perfectly legal. Seneca[1] said, 'We drown our children if weak or deformed.' Thus, a father could within the limits of the law put his child to death, sell him into slavery, or expose him, leaving him to die or to be taken up by any passer-by. This all sounds horrible to modern minds; but it appears, says Tucker,[2] 'highly improbable that in the truly Roman part of the empire there was any considerable destruction of infant life or exposure of infants.' Nevertheless, the father's power over an undisciplined or refractory child was absolute. The discipline of the family was a powerful tradition in Roman society; but public opinion could certainly operate against an excessive abuse of the parental powers.

As regards the status of womanhood, the Greek conception of woman as physically and intellectually inferior to man undoubtedly prevailed in many parts of the empire; but in Rome itself the well-born Roman women enjoyed a large amount of freedom,

[1] Cf. *De Ira*. 1. 15.

[2] See his useful and picturesque *Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul*; and cf. the oft-quoted papyrus letter of Hilarion to his wife Alis, 1 B.C.: 'If—good luck to you—you bear offspring, let it live, if it is a male; if it is a female, expose it.' See Milligan, *Greek Papyri*, p. 33, for whole letter.

and held positions of responsibility and dignity.[1] There was none of the seclusion which even Sparta inflicted upon women, though assigning peculiar honour to them as a necessary factor in the well-being of the State. Nevertheless, in Rome social distinctions affected the legal position of a wife which varied according to the form of marriage adopted. The nobler families were married by *confarreatio*, the ancient form by which a wife passed absolutely into the power of her husband. Whether this practice prevailed in the lower orders to any extent cannot be determined. Anyhow, there was increasing popularity in the early empire of the alternative form of *usus*, whereby the woman did not pass into the power of man, but lived in her own way, always, of course, observing strict fidelity to him. If infidelity or incompatibility or other cause of mutual dissension occurred, either party might formally repudiate the contract. Thus, only public sentiment, or family influence, or natural pride, or mutual affection could save either husband or wife from following their own inclinations. It is difficult to say how far such contracts contributed to the appalling prevalence of divorce and looseness of morals which in the Neronian age was so marked. We might easily, from a reading of Juvenal, come to think of the horrible degradation of a Messalina as typical, and get the impression that

[1] 'They walked and drove in the public thoroughfares with veils that did not conceal their faces, they dined in the company of men, they studied literature and philosophy, they took part in political movements, they were allowed to defend their own law cases if they liked, and they helped their husbands in the government of provinces and the writing of books' (Donaldson, *Woman: her Position in Ancient Greece and Rome*, &c., p. 154).

the relation of the sexes was universally lax, just as a glance at a modern newspaper, with its multiplicity of divorce cases, might lead one to argue a general weakening of the marriage-tie in every range of English society. Neither in the Rome of Nero nor in the England of to-day is this true. What is clear is that the idea of marriage as a matter of personal choice or affection seems to have been largely unknown in the empire; and it is just at this point that Christianity, which lays the stress on the rights of the individual and the claims of love, could offer a challenge to the prevailing conception of married life, even though it is only fair to say that history gives some most charming types of noble and virtuous Roman matrons and distinguished examples of connubial loyalty.[1]

How were the children educated? The Roman had a sacred interest in the maintenance of the family, and was trained to regard marriage as a normal fulfilment of duty as citizens. Further, in spite of certain features of the *patria potestas* objectionable to modern ideas, the parents cared for and loved their children. Take, for example, the father of Horace, a not too wealthy freedman, who gave his son an excellent education and cared so well for his morals and character that the poet indites to his memory one of the most sincere and grateful filial tributes in Roman literature.[2] But in the age of the late Republic and early empire the high standard of parental training degenerated, with bad results for the manners and

[1] See Warde Fowler, *Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero*, pp. 145-167.
[2] Cf. *Sat.*, i. 7, 70 f.

morals of the children, if we may trust the evidence of Tacitus.[1] Hence when, under Augustus, a decline in the birth-rate took place, laws penalizing either unmarried or childless persons were passed, while the State granted fixed concessions to parents of three children, and organized a system of public support for children with a view to a healthy population.[2] In Rome the life of children was remarkably modern; they were rocked in cradles, they were told fairy-tales, they played with tops and hobby-horses, dolls and pet animals, and were even taught the letters by a kindergarten method. The better class children might have a private tutor, but the majority went to school. The State took no pains to educate the children; their education was a matter for the parents, and depended on social status and economic competence. The State did not interfere. If the parents themselves could not undertake the duty, boys and girls were sent to a master (*litterator*), sometimes a slave in the house, sometimes a freedman who taught in families or schools. The three 'R's' were, as with us, the staple of elementary education. The next stage was training under a *grammaticus*, who might be either a Roman or a Greek. Homer was the school book, and with the Greek Homer was linked the study of the Roman Livy and Terence, and, later on, of Virgil[3]

[1] Cf. *Dial.*, 28 f.

[2] See art. 'Children (Roman),' *E. R. E.* (Warde Fowler) and Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

[3] Readers of the *Confessions* of St. Augustine will recall how the sorrows of Dido, the wooden horse, the burning of Troy, and the shadow of Creusa—the great passages of Virgil—engrossed his interest, and how under the *rhetor* he read the lost Ciceronian treatise of the *Hortensius*, which, strangely enough, caused him to yearn for 'the immortality of wisdom with an

and Horace. Not merely the elements of grammar proper, but subjects arising out of the literature—geography, history, mythology, astronomy, &c.—were studied. The higher stage was the school of a *rhetor*, where training was given for the duties of public life—style, delivery, and oratory. Greek was the chief language used, and Greek culture was the hall-mark of a liberal education. In imperial times it became widely the custom for a family to employ a Greek *paidagogos*[1] or a Greek female slave to teach the rudiments of that language. In Vespasian's time the higher education was subsidized by the empire, and £850 annually was assigned to Latin and Greek rhetoricians in Rome. Public appointments of philosophers, rhetoricians, and grammarians were made in the chief cities of the empire, and these lecturers became officials supported partly by their communities, partly by the emperors. Hadrian's *Athenaeum*, established in A.D. 135 in Rome, was a theatre in which rhetoricians and poets and salaried professors gave public recitations and lectures. Certain cities like Athens, Alexandria, Antioch, Marseilles, and Tarsus were what we should call 'university' cities, frequented by the youth of the empire because of the fame of the numerous professors and lecturers who had settled in them. The chief theme was philosophy, which represented the staple of what we would describe as a post-graduate course.

incredible glow of heart,' and marked a spiritual epoch in his career. Cf. *Confessions*, i. 13 and iii. 4.

[1] The word used by St. Paul in Gal. iii. 24–25 and translated 'schoolmaster' in A.V. Cf. *sup.*, p. 83. For the whole subject see *E. R. E.*, art. 'Education (Roman),' by J. Wright Duff.

We are familiar with the outlines of the great Roman house, such as the house of Pansa or of the Vettii at Pompeii, with its *atrium* or hall, flanked by chambers and opening into a reception-room, on either side of which was the dining-room and the library, while beyond lay the peristyle, a quadrangular or open-air garden surrounded by colonnades—splendidly equipped mansions with their wall paintings and marble pillars and tessellated floors. We are familiar also with the outline of the country house or the larger farmstead, described by Pater in *Marius the Epicurean*, a low, rambling building with wine-presses, threshing-floor, fermenting-room, and a homely, simple *atrium*, decorated with the busts or medallions of ancestors, whose actual masks or *imagines* might be preserved in receptacles, labelled with the name and rank of the departed. But we have only conjecture to help us in visualizing the humbler dwellings, the cottages and cabins of the labourer, and the city *insulae* or blocks of buildings, where the poor crowded into self-contained tenements or flats with possibly the outlet of a roof garden, while the lowest floor usually consisted of shops, above which the shopkeeper might reside. Recent excavations in Ostia—the port of Rome—enable us to realize the ordinary type of house of the middle classes and the people—dwellings on a remarkably modern plan of three and four stories high, typical of a busy commercial city. That a great social gulf was fixed between the upper and lower classes is shown, not only by the disparity of their domestic environments, but by the contempt of the

patrician families for those of humbler origin, the poor, and all tradespeople. 'To the aristocratic Roman, with his contempt of petty trade, "Born in a shop-loft" was a contemptuous phrase for a son of nobody.'[1]

This rapid sketch would be incomplete without a reference to the public amusements and spectacles. Rome was not nearly so interested in athletics as Greece. The Roman believed in such physical training as was necessary for military service; but there was no system of universal conscription. The younger men of the higher classes were expected to undergo some military training. The northern part of the Campus Martius was used as an exercise-ground for the Roman youth, who learnt riding there and military drill. The theatre was not greatly esteemed, and the actor was socially beyond the pale. Plays were written, but they were intended to be read, not acted; such as Seneca's. If the Roman citizen had no Sunday, his State religion, with its annual festivals, gave him plenty of holidays—perhaps a hundred days in the year. For instance, the *Saturnalia*, or festival in honour of Saturnus, god of seed-time, was carried on for seven days in the month of December, like our Christmas holidays, which are, in fact, an adaptation of it; slaves could put on a freeman's cap for one day, the people gave presents to one another, and all work came to an end. But the circus games (*ludi circenses*), performed in the Circus Maximus, were the chief

[1] Cf. Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 142. This description of a *terrae filius* appears to be taken from Petronius (74) *in pergula natus*; but probably *pergula* signifies only a hut or cabin.

attraction; they were given by the State, and might cost on occasion £6,000 or £7,000. 'Bread and the circus games' (*panem et circenses*) ranked together in the demands of the proletariat. If any citizen succeeded to a public office, he was expected to provide a show. Hence these spectacles were the real popular amusement. They were opened with a great procession from the Capitol, in which images of the gods were borne on carriages. Even in Caesar's day 150,000 spectators could be accommodated on the terraced seats which surrounded the circus, but owing to repeated enlargements their accommodation was doubled by the fourth century. The spectacle consisted of acrobatics and chariot-races, which were backed by opposing factions, 'blue' or 'green.' The custom of chariot-races lasted for centuries in the empire; in the year 532 Justinian nearly lost his life and throne in Constantinople owing to the Nika riots between opposing factions of the Hippodrome. The vast arena of the Campus Martius was framed on a Greek model; the native product was the oval amphitheatre, of which the Colosseum at Rome and that of Pompeii are the most familiar remains. It was in these buildings that the gladiatorial shows and beast-fights—fights between man and man, and man and beast—with their horrible accessories of cruelty and bloodshed, were presented. These gladiatorial contests were typically Roman, for the Greek disliked bloodshed.

It was to this aspect of the social life of Rome that the Church offered its direct and stern challenge. To

the Christian conscience the shows of the amphitheatre symbolized the deep degradation of paganism, not merely because they were the occasion of innumerable martyrdoms, but because, by their association with the religion of Rome, they expressed the hideous moral insensibility of the masses who were 'without God in the world.' Tertullian, who hated[1] with the bitterest loathing of his puritan nature the theatre and the public spectacles, traces their origin to the sin of idolatry. He will not forbid the Christian to enter the circus or even the temples of paganism, but he warns them against the peril of their horrible associations: 'The places in themselves do not contaminate, but what is done in them'; 'The polluted things pollute us.'[2]

To sum up these impressions, we can see that while there was much that is commendable in the social life of the empire, there were some grave defects. Infanticide and gladiatorial shows, for example, reveal a rooted indifference to the value of the individual life. The sanctity of personality was the truth that Christianity alone could stamp on the human heart. And in the first instance the work of Christianity lay in arousing the individual conscience. It could not effect an immediate reform of the whole social system. The artisan guilds and companies (*collegia*)[3] of Rome, established for mutual support and help or for providing funerals, were invariably associated with a special cult or worship of a given deity. It may be

[1] Cf. *De Spec.*, 7.

[2] *Ibid.*, 8: *De contaminatis contaminamur.*

[3] See *infra.*, p. 190 f.

said that the worship of some deity was the one reason for the imperial recognition of a guild. Secret guilds were ruthlessly suppressed. Christianity came into the Roman world with a gospel of life utterly hostile to the idolatries of paganism. Whatever social value might attach to a recognized trade guild, it was neutralized for the Christian conscience by its fundamental association with a pagan cult. The growth of a new social fellowship, regarded as it was by the authorities in the earlier stages as secret, illicit, and anarchic, was, in the nature of things, only an exceedingly gradual process. Even to-day we are far from having reached the ideal of the social ethics of Christ, and no one can say that the social order of modern Britain is in harmony with His teaching. The early teacher had to begin with a few fundamental concepts—the sanctity of the body, with its corollary the law of chastity, the inherent independence and value of the individual—a truth which was eventually to overthrow slavery—the eternity of character, and the possibility of moral degeneration. As Dr. Bigg, speaking of the early Church, points out : ' It was in the field of private morality that she accomplished most. She regarded it rightly as her first and principal duty to purify the soul of the individual and draw him into brotherly communion with his fellow believers.' It would appear that the effect of Christianity on public morality was comparatively negligible. One reason is that it did not to any extent influence the imperial system. The people that were converted to Christ had no place in the government. There was no democratic

representation, and there were no popular rights. *Vox populi* there was none ; Emperor, Senate, and Army were the chief factors in the direction of the imperial affairs. It is true, as Dr. Bigg remarks, that ' Certain judicial powers were given to the bishop ; but the great ecclesiastics were never formally admitted to the councils of the empire.'[1] Even when Constantine recognized Christianity, and emperors favourable to Christianity succeeded to the purple, the Church as such had no controlling voice in the imperial policy. The fourth and fifth centuries showed a steady decline and corruption in the government which Christianity was powerless to check ; the crash came with the triumph of the barbarians. All history teaches the same lesson : Christianity must Christianize governments and State policy. The spiritualizing of society is as sacred a duty as the conversion of the individual man. The gospel has survived in history all changes of governments ; but every successive failure in the forms of government cries aloud for the application of Christian principle to the body politic, and the transformation of national and international life by the Spirit of Christ.

[1] Cf. *The Church's Task in the R.E.*, p. 121 f.

EPILOGUE: COMPARISON WITH MODERN CONDITIONS

THE foregoing rapid outline of the conditions—social, intellectual, religious—amid which Christianity worked and its adherents lived in the first three centuries has presented us with many phases for which we can find parallels in the modern world. The outer forms of civilization have changed, but mankind has not changed. The old gods have vanished. The ancient religion survives only in the innumerable customs and seasons which have passed into the life of the Church and society. The names of some of the week-days, but more especially of the months, are everyday reminders of the impress which Roman civilization, law, religion, and government left on the world. We may recall how, in famous novels like Reade's *Cloister and the Hearth* and Shorthouse's *John Inglesant*, whole pages are devoted to a wonderful and eloquent statement of the heritage of rite, custom, and symbolism which paganism bequeathed to Latin Catholicism, showing how true it is that the past can never die; and each cycle of human history gives its own contribution of influence, of tradition, custom, and memory, to the fund of common experience. A stupendous upheaval of society like that caused by the European War has left us with social conditions in Europe which only

a veritable revival of Christian ethics can rectify. Unemployment, unrest, poverty, starvation, the consequent embittering of human relationships, and the seemingly inveterate social divisions that separate rich and poor, employer and employed, have caused in Europe suffering on so wide a scale that the barbarian wars and the dark ages scarcely offer a parallel to it. Indeed, the age of the Antonines, when Christianity was fighting for its existence, affords by comparison a vision of smiling prosperity and social well-being. Add to this the loosening of moral restraints, the social laxity, the diminished value of human life, the hardening and coarsening of the soul, the apparent or real indifference of masses of the people to the appeal of religion; and we have the materials for the pessimism of a modern Tacitus and the moral indignation of a second Juvenal.

We have noted, too, the perpetuation of the old heresies and early Christian forms of thought. If Stoicism as a form of thought lost its vogue, Stoicism as an attitude to life has never died. Christian Science has achieved a wide popularity by its combination of the healthy-mindedness of the Sermon on the Mount with that tranquil acceptance of the ills of life which was inculcated by Marcus Aurelius. Robert Louis Stevenson is still the popular exemplar of this Christian Stoicism in literature, but he never went to the lengths of extreme forms of Christian Science in rejecting medical aid or disparaging the benefits conferred by science on human life. Montanism, in the forms of Millenarianism and Second Adventism, flourishes in

the States, even if these by-products of Christianity have less vogue on this side of the Atlantic. Theosophy is only Gnosticism under another name, and the premisses of Gnosticism find expression in most existing forms of Oriental religion and mysticism. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shintoism offer many parallels with the mystical elements of the ancient cults, proving that Oriental pantheism, spiritism, animism *et hoc genus omne* persist in the thought of mankind. Christian Gnosticism is with us in the subtle attempts to disparage history in favour of a residual 'Christ-idea,' perpetual and triumphant amid the uncertainties of human evidence. As already noted above,[1] Rudolph Steiner has given us a new Christ-mysticism in his Anthroposophy or Spiritual Science which seeks to elevate Art, Science, Education, Economics, Politics, and Religion into a spiritual universe. He dreams of the sum of human activity being brought under the sway of 'the Christ-impulse.' On more popular lines, H. G. Wells's *Invisible King* was recognized on its appearance as Marcionism in a modern dress, giving us Marcion's two gods and repeating his eclectic views of Christ. Finally, all forms of belief, mechanical or symbolic in their character, whether of the spiritualism that is content to accept the demonstration of the survival of the departed by the employment of the abnormal susceptibility of a *medium*, or of clairvoyance, or crystal-gazing, or the guarantee of good health and safety supposed to be given by charms or mascots,

[1] See p. 68.

are evidences of the recurrence or permanence of superstitions, which have been a familiar feature of epochs of change from the days of Isaiah and Simon Magus to the present time.

How is Christianity—to which men still turn as the one source of a new spiritual impulse in human society and as the solution of all our troubles—how is Christianity to meet the objection that it has failed to overcome a world in which old vices, old superstitions, old half-beliefs, flaunt themselves unashamed? The answer lies, we believe, in the assertion that there can be no ultimate failure of Christianity, unless it abandons its task. It must continue to exercise on mankind the same moral power, the same intensity of conviction, the same resolute self-renunciation, the same joyous and adventurous faith which steadily, for the first three centuries, not only survived obloquy and persecution, but actually became strong in its weakness. In order to apply this ideal to the modern Church we propose to present some typical phases or pictures of Christianity in action during the epoch of conflict. It is only by learning afresh the lessons of history that we can rest assured that the faith, undaunted both by public indifference and the reproach of failure, must not relax its effort or cease to pursue its slowly-maturing, but eventually effective, world-task.

PART III

THE CONFLICT OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY WITH THE WORLD: SOME ASPECTS AND PHASES

PART III

I

THE CHRISTIAN UNDER PERSECUTION

St. Paul was the first representative Christian to leave an impress on the empire. As we follow him on his travels in the Acts of the Apostles, and as we study his self-disclosure in those vivid letters which so marvellously illustrate the historical record, we have an absorbing and appealing portraiture of Christianity at work in the wider world beyond the limits of Galilee and Judaea. It is not our purpose to trace his career, or to seek by a detailed study of the Acts and the New Testament writings to set forth the familiar facts of the swift and immediate advance of the Christian faith in Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy. We have already mentioned that the chief obstacle the early missionaries had to encounter was the opposition of the Jews. Even among them the truth secured striking acceptance; but its chief adherents were Gentiles who, having been attracted by the pure faith of the Jews, were already prepared for the larger light of Christianity. Christianity held out a fuller life to those who saw all life revalued in Christ. We watch the struggles of the little fellowships created and shepherded by the Christian missionary; we note their endeavour to break with the ways of paganism; and

we learn how individuals failed grievously or triumphed gloriously in this conflict with self and surroundings. Nothing is obscured or glossed over, a fact which at every turn increases our respect for the genuineness of the narrative. We have noted that the ' saints ' of Colossae and Corinth and Rome were not perfect Christians, using the epithet in its familiar sense of ' faultless.' But the general result is clear. A new chastity, a belief in prayer, offered not at a heathen shrine, but as an exercise of the soul independent of external rite or locality, a humility of spirit, an intensified sense of social duty in the relationship of master and slave, of parents and children, a tenderness for the poor, a patience with the fallen, an entirely fresh reverence for man as man, a glowing ' enthusiasm of humanity,' a joyous acceptance of life's ills, begetting tranquillity and gentleness, and over all the controlling, transforming power of hope—such are the effects of the moral dynamic of Christ. We rise above the mists, sometimes lurid, often soul-deadening, of ' the hard pagan world,' and emerge into the purity of an Alpine dawn.

Then suddenly a dark shadow falls deep across the scene. A crisis has arisen. Calvary was the first crisis of the faith, and now a lesser Calvary is prepared for the Christ-followers. We pass from the triumphs of the gospel to the ' acts of the martyrs.' The Neronian persecution, sudden, hideous, and irrational, is depicted in a few terrific sentences of Tacitus. No historical narrative from a Christian eye-witness of the actual sufferings of individual saints is extant—only casual

references and traditions, such as the report of the beheading of St. Paul and St. Peter,[1] and the scattered allusions in later records which give us the names of obscure and unknown sufferers. This was 'the beginning of woes.' Christianity appears for the first time on the pages of one of Rome's greatest historians as 'a pestilent superstition checked for a while' after the death of Christ; its chief feature was a hatred of the human race, and, therefore, its professors, being withal supposed guilty of 'secret crimes,' are singled out as culprits by the emperor to stifle the report of his own shameless iniquities. Even Tacitus, who apparently accepts the general view of their character, bears witness to a reaction of compassion, inasmuch as they were destroyed, not for the good of the State, but to satisfy the cruelty of an individual. Nevertheless, the fact remained that in the gardens of Nero the Christians had passed through the fires and miserably perished.

This horrible event served to affix a stigma on the profession of Christ in the metropolis of the empire. All Rome knew that the Christians were a people suspect and 'a third race,' a current phase reported by Tertullian,[2] which to a modern interpreter means that they 'were neither civilized nor barbarian, but so unutterably mean as to be scarcely human.' Whether St. Peter was actually author of the first epistle bearing his name or not, its place of origin is generally considered to be Rome. If so, its phrases[3]

[1] Cf. 1 Clem. *ad Cor.*, v. 7.
[2] Cf. *Ad Nat.*, i. 8, used also by Clem. Alex.; see p. 88 *sup.*
[3] Cf. iii. 15, iv. 14–16, v. 8.

may record the trials of the Neronian or of some succeeding terror as the ground of an exhortation to cultivate peaceful relations with the empire and undying hope in the last extremity. For the fatal example of Nero was in the course of a generation to be followed. The persecution of Domitian[1] carried on the tradition. The Christian societies are henceforth to be regarded by the State authorities as secret revolutionary organizations *sui generis*, hostile to the empire, to its gods, and in particular to the worship of the emperor, and thereby stamped as anarchic and traitorous to the majesty of Rome.[2]

The Apocalypse of St. John, too, may with some probability be conceived as a martyr-document in the setting of a Jewish Apocalypse, wherein the Christian author or redactor has, in a series of tremendous visions and under cryptic figures[3] of which the meaning was obvious to the Christians of the day, portrayed 'the great tribulation' of fire and blood which in various parts of the empire, but notably in Asia Minor, the Christians had to endure. Seven[4] churches are singled out for praise or correction as typical of the spirit—now brave, now vacillating, now actually guilty of cowardice and its fruits, apostasy or moral degradation—with which the fiery trials under

[1] Cf. Hardy, *Studies in Roman History*, for the persecution of Domitian and the evidence of the *Apoc.*, pp. 71 f.

[2] See *infra.*, p. 190 f, on the question of Christianity and its relation to *collegia, sodalitates*, &c.

[3] e.g. the 'Beast' is for all interpreters the Roman Empire; the woman in purple typifies its luxury and degradation.

[4] Of these Pergamum had a temple of Rome and Augustus, the first to be erected. Here was 'the throne of Satan,' and Antipas was one of the earliest Christians from among a 'great multitude' in the next three centuries who refused emperor worship (Rev. ii. 13).

Domitian were faced. It is a series of frescoes, depicting the sufferings of the saints or the punishment in the hell of fire of the enemies of the faith, anon glorifying the reward of those who have overcome and 'made white their robes,' that is, have attained to the purity of Christ by a sacrificial death like His. Or, if I may change the metaphor, the *motif* of the symphony of the Apocalypse is victory or overcoming, a theme recurring in each and all the movements of this mighty orchestrated poem of the faith-dying-to-live.

After Domitian, persecution sporadically breaks out. Polycarp of Smyrna, the story of whose martyrdom is the subject of the earliest example of a noble series of *Acta Martyrum*,[1] died nobly for Christ in the principate of Antoninus Pius. In vain did the police captain of Smyrna and this officer's father, Niketas, put to him a question which was to become typical in the history of persecution: 'What harm is it to say, "Lord Caesar" (κύριος καῖσαρ), to offer sacrifice and so forth and be saved?' It was a suggestion that was to awaken no response but the will to be loyal to a greater than Caesar. Not long afterwards—namely, in 177—the great persecution of Lyons took place. Several circumstances combined to make it memorable. The reigning emperor was the 'saint of paganism,' Marcus Aurelius; the occasion was the celebration of the festival of Rome and Augustus, in connexion with the temple (one of many in the empire)[2]

[1] See *Martyrium S. Polycarpi* in the Apostolic Fathers. Also in Gebhardt's *Acta Selecta Martyrum*, a volume which every student of early Christianity should possess.

[2] See the writer's *Here and There in the Historic Near East* for a description of the ruined buildings of the temple at Ancyra (the modern Angora).

commemorating the dual apotheosis of the Genius of the City and the Emperor. The place was an outpost of the Western Empire in Gaul, destined to historical importance by its central position at the meeting-place of the two great rivers Saône and Rhone, on the high-road that led to Spain, to Britain, and to Germany.

Eusebius' account[1] of the persecution is of extraordinary interest. It is the first direct evidence of the existence of a Christian community so far west; and some of the names of the martyred—e.g. Attalus of Pergamum, Alexander from Phrygia—suggest that Lyons and the neighbouring town of Vienne, or Vienna,[2] owed their Christianity to the missionary efforts of the Churches of Asia. At all events, the letter containing the story is addressed to brethren in Asia and Phrygia. The fact that Irenaeus, who survived the persecution and afterwards became bishop of Lyons in succession to the martyred Pothinus, came from Smyrna and was the devoted disciple of Polycarp, lends considerable probability to this most interesting view. Pothinus, the aged bishop, is a pathetic victim, mercifully dying in his ninetieth year after two days in the prison into which he was cast. Of the four who were led out into the amphitheatre to the wild beasts the figure of Blandina, the slave-girl, shines out with surpassing beauty. She was stretched on a cross, then thrown to wild beasts that refused to touch her, and finally placed in a net to be gored by a wild bull. Her patience, her courage,

[1] See *H. E.*, v. 1.

[2] Not to be confounded with Vindobunum, afterwards Vienna, the modern capital of Austria.

her unswerving fidelity, her hope, her fellowship (*homilia*) with Christ, provoked the heart-moving and ever-memorable words of the Lyons epistle, that those who saw her in her conflict 'beheld through her even with their outward eyes Him who was crucified for them.' Blandina, too, was bound to a cross, as her Lord was, and all the Christians saw the likeness of the Crucified through the frail guise of her mortal flesh. With her perished Sanctus, a deacon of Vienne, Attalus, a Roman citizen, and Ponticus, a slave-boy aged fifteen, who dared everything, being encouraged by the example of Blandina. The annals of martyrdom contain the names of mere children like Dionysia of Troas, a girl who died in the Decian persecution, and Hilarian, a lad whose courage in the African persecution under Diocletian was marvellous. Sometimes the parents approved the bravery of their children, like the mother of Symphorian of Autun, in Gaul. It had been noticed that Symphorian, while conversing with a man of consular rank, as the procession of Berecynthia (Cybele), mother of the gods, was passing by, refused respect.[1] Haled before the judge, he confessed his faith. 'How much better,' said Heraclius, 'you could act, if, serving the immortal gods, you distinguished yourself in military service.' The appeal was useless, and as Symphorian was led out to death his old mother witnessed the scene from the city walls, and cried, 'Oh, my son, my son Symphorian, remember the living God. . . . My child, be of good courage this day; you go by a happy

[1] See Holmes, *Christian Church in Gaul*, p. 52, for the authorities.

exchange to life eternal'—famous words that are preserved in the Gothic missal. On the other hand, the father of Vibia Perpetua of Thuburbo Major, in North Africa—one of the most pathetic and wonderful of all the women martyrs—sought to dissuade his daughter with tears of anguish from her purpose. 'Daughter, have pity on my grey hairs; have compassion on thy father. . . . Behold thy brother, thy mother, thy aunt; behold thy babe, that cannot live without thee.' And Perpetua wept because he alone of all her loved ones could not rejoice in her martyrdom, wept but stood firm. Side by side with the slave-girl Felicitas, who was pale and weak from recent childbirth, the lady Perpetua, also a recent mother, gently nurtured, cultured, and honourably married, passed from the savage attacks of wild animals in the arena to the peace everlasting.[1]

Let these examples[2] suffice. They can easily be multiplied. The martyrs were a great multitude that no man can number. Neither sex nor rank, neither age nor honour, was spared. Many of the magistrates must have hated their task, although among them were brutal and callous natures, to whom the sufferings of Christians brought no pangs of relenting. The martyrdom of Perpetua belongs to the year 203—the dawn of the third century, when Septimius Severus was emperor. Beginning his reign with leniency and even favour towards the Christians (as

[1] See the *Passio SS. Perpetuae et Felicitatis* in Gebhardt, *op. cit.*

[2] The reader is recommended to study for the causes of the persecution Workman's *Persecution in the Early Church*, and for the stories of martyrs his *Martyrs of the Early Church.*

afterwards the arch-persecutor Diocletian commenced his reign), he became later alarmed at their increase of numbers and initiated at Carthage those repressive measures which opened a new epoch in the imperial attitude to Christianity. Up to this point the profession had been regarded as an offence against the police regulations on a level with brigandage or other breaches of common law. It was largely a matter left to the local magistrate, who viewed it either seriously or lightly, in a spirit of panic or bigotry, in accordance with his own conception of responsibility for the public welfare. It was confined to localities, cities like Smyrna or Lyons, or villages of North Africa like Scili[1] or Madaura. But in the middle of the third century, with the accession of Decius, the Christian religion assumed the character of a political problem. Was it to be suppressed in the interest of the State as a public danger to the empire, or lifted to the rank of a licensed religion? The former alternative—suppression—was chosen as the fatal policy of Decius, who struck at the heads of the Church. By signing a certificate[2] attesting that he had sacrificed by offering drink or tasting the sacrifice, every suspected man could escape punishment. But the main attack was not on the humbler Christians, but on the officials of the Church in the great cities, such as Carthage in North Africa, and Alexandria, whence Dionysius, the bishop, was persuaded by his friends to flee for

[1] See for story of Scillitan martyrs *I. E. C. H.*, pp. 57–8.

[2] We have extant a copy of one of these *libelli*. Cf. for text Gwatkin's *Selections from Early Christian Writers*, p. 144, and for the Decian persecution Eusebius, *H. E.*, vi. 39–42.

his life. Perhaps the most notable victim was Fabian, bishop of Rome; while in Asia Minor Origen, *cir.* A.D. 254, the brilliant and erudite theologian and scholar of the Church, died from the effects of torture. Happily the Decian terror was brief. But Valerian recommenced repressive measures, especially against the clergy; and among the bishops who perished was the saintly and noble-hearted Cyprian of Carthage, whose martyrdom was the signal of a bloody persecution in Numidia, and Fructuosus, bishop of Tarragona, in Spain, who with his deacons was burned alive. Then with the death of Valerian, and the accession of Gallienus, in A.D. 260, the Church may be said to have enjoyed peace[1] until the great persecution under Diocletian, whose evil genius was his Caesar, Galerius. It broke out in the year 303 at Nicomedeia[2] (the modern Ismid), and in the pages of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea and Lactantius *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* we can read the story of its horrors, up to the issue of the edict of toleration by the dying Galerius (311), who thus sought to express his belated penitence for past cruelties. A year later (October 27, 312) Constantine entered Rome after vanquishing his rival Maxentius, and in 313 this historic victory was commemorated by the famous Edict of Toleration, which left every man free to choose his own religion.

This bare summary of the epoch of persecution may suffice to remind us that for nearly three hundred

[1] Individual martyrdoms nevertheless occurred; e.g. the martyrdom of Dionysius, bishop of Paris, the St. Denys of France, is believed to have taken place under Aurelian in A.D. 272.

[2] Cf., for an account of the persecution at Nicomedeia, the writer's *Here and There in the Historic Near East*, pp. 99–101.

years the profession of Christianity was a call to live dangerously. We can form no conception of the numbers of the martyrs; neither can we conjecture the numbers of those who evaded an open confession of Christianity or were actual 'apostates.'[1] In the first two centuries persecution was not general, but broke out, as we have stated, in localities where there might be some particular act of provocation, or special circumstances demanding strong measures against the Christians. Nevertheless, the profession of Christianity was an uneasy experience to the Christians owing to the very uncertainty of their position in the eyes of the authorities, and the incalculable attitude of individual governors who might yield to popular clamour and become zealous for the law, or might prefer for personal reasons to rid themselves of the responsibility.[2] If charged by an informer or enemy or meddlesome person before the magistrate, the latter would inevitably consider the case on its own merits, and insist on the accused clearing himself by performing a heathen sacrifice. A persistent refusal was inevitably regarded as a capital offence, meriting death. But the presence of an accuser[3] was essential, and was really a safeguard to the Christian, who might be mercifully judged by

[1] Tertullian in his *De fuga in persec.* 4 denounces flight under persecution, but his stern logic was not generally followed. It was only the few that courted death or voluntarily gave themselves up; the majority followed the N.T. teaching on such passages as Matt. x. 23 and were supported therein by leaders of the Church. Cf. Workman, *P. E. C.*, pp. 338 f.

[2] See Tertullian, *Ad Scap.* 4, for instances of even resolute and cruel magistrates who 'contrived to get quit of such causes altogether' (*dissimulaverint ab huiusmodi causis*).

[3] Cf. *ibid.* the case of Pudens, who tore the indictment in pieces in the absence of the accuser and so dismissed the Christian without hearing the case.

his magistrate. The danger became more acute in the third century, when Christianity was the subject of imperial edicts ; in every province, however distant, as far west as Spain and as far east as Cappadocia, this edict would be carried into execution. It is clear that some callings would be more dangerous than others, that is, subject the Christian to a greater test ; perhaps the most dangerous of all was that of the common soldier (considered in the succeeding chapter), while a citizen of repute, as tradesman or professional man, might escape notice when living under less rigorous oversight than that of the army.

It is not necessary to point once again the moral of the persecution. The conclusion is obvious, is, indeed, stated very simply in the famous terse words of Tertullian—too often misquoted—'The blood of the Christians is seed'[1]—seed of other things besides the *ecclesia ;* seed of the very spirit and essence of the Christian faith, which transcends all expression of itself, whether in the individual or in the corporate life of the Church. It is not merely endurance of pain and death, which can easily be paralleled outside Christianity. According to Tertullian (*ibid.*), it is in its injustice that there lies a proof of the innocence of the Christians. 'Quite recently, by condemning a Christian woman to the lust of man rather than to a lion, you confessed that the stain upon chastity is reckoned more heinous among us than any punishment and any death.' Further it is useless. 'That very obstinacy, with which you upbraid us, is a lesson,'

[1] Cf. *Apol.* 50.

says Tertullian. It stirs not only emotion, but calls for consideration—consideration of its essential meaning. There was something behind the outward act, a secret of self-surrender and loyalty to the truth which, when mastered, led the careless to seek the whole favour of God, to suffer in his turn, and by sacrifice to realize the joy of forgiveness. Not by words of the philosopher and theologian, however learned, but by *deeds*,[1] by the fearless acceptance of death rather than by the violation of conscience and 'the ghastly smooth life' of a great refusal—by such acts Christianity is for all time justified of her children.

[1] Cf. Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 38 : *Non eloquimur magna sed vivimus* ('We do not talk great things, but we live them').

II

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE ROMAN ARMY

Our object in this chapter is to discover how the individual Christian acted in a calling that by its very nature, as a branch of the imperial service, tested the reality of the Christian's faith to the utmost. On the face of it there could be no objection to a Christian serving in the army. Early Christianity did not adopt a hostile attitude to the institutions of the empire, either civil or military. It did not, for example, originate an agitation against slavery, which was a flagrant violation of the Christian principle of the equality of all men before God ; it wisely was content to leave that principle to work as a leaven in existing society, and to await the inevitable result of its acceptance by the conscience of mankind. We have not to think of the Christian community as a whole resisting either actively or passively the laws of the empire except when confronted by tests to their religious convictions and loyalties, such as the worship of the emperor or participation in sacrifices of paganism. An early Christian did not withdraw from the routine of his calling ; nor did he live a cloistered existence, shunning his fellows and neglecting the duties of citizenship. Nor did he shed his national idiosyncrasies. A Greek remained a Greek ; a North African

retained the characteristics of his race ; and it is likely that the effect of Christianity upon the individual was to intensify natural traits and peculiarities of temperament as it widened his outlook on life and altered his relationship to his fellows. We have only to think of the outstanding figures of the New Testament to realize the truth of this generalization. St. Luke is the only Gentile writer in the New Testament ; his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles everywhere show the wide outlook and universal sympathies of a Greek ; and, as Ramsay remarks, 'He became even more intensely a Greek as his whole life became more intense and more unselfish.' In St. Paul the Rabbinism of his training remained as a fixed element in his intellectual apprehension of Christianity, combining with—more often struggling against—the larger Greek conception of life and thought which he had imbibed from his contact with the spirit and literature of Hellenism. It is from these two writers that we can gather our most vivid ideas of the environment of early Christian life and the relation of the new convert to the society in which he moved and lived his daily life. The ethical problem arising, e.g., from the question of purchasing or partaking meat of animals slain at a pagan sacrifice sorely perplexed the Christians of Corinth, and its solution required all the resources of the apostle's wisdom. St. Paul, on the other hand, upheld the constitution of the empire as ordained by God. He was well aware of 'that which restrained,'[1] that is, the might of imperial law and the imperial

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 6: *τὸ κάτεχον.*

police system directed against offences such as assassination, brigandage, and other crimes against the social order. He saw how Christianity in its first stages was to depend on the protection of the empire from tyrannical and unjust treatment of State officials and others. The emperor, as such, stood for the principles of justice and social security. Then we realize what a powerful aid on his travels the Roman citizenship was to him. The proud assertion, *civis Romanus sum*, ensured a fair trial and security to his person and property. If these rights were ever violated, as at Philippi, it was accidental, due perhaps in that city to his failure to obtain a hearing in the hubbub of the occasion. Later the magistrates became alarmed and apologetic on hearing of their error. Citizenship was at once a safeguard and a responsibility for the followers of Christ. Hence St. Paul[1] enjoins prayer for the powers that be, as St. Peter[2] enjoins submission to the emperor and local governors[3]—the use of the latter expression covering all authority delegated by the emperor—and both apostles on the ground that the government not only represses crime, but makes for the positive acts of well-doing and develops social service. Even Tertullian, bitter opponent of so much in the secular and religious customs and rites of the empire,[4] remarks, 'We pray always for all emperors that they may have

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 2. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 14.

[3] ἡγέμων, properly a *procurator* or a *legatus* of the emperor, like Pliny, is used here generally.

[4] Cf. *Apol.*, 30–35 for the whole question of attitude of the Christians to Caesar and the empire, and *Ad Scap.* 4.

a long life, a safe rule, a faithful Senate, loyal subjects, a peaceful world—all that a man and a Caesar pray for.' Further,[1] he gives it as his solemn opinion that the existence of the empire is a respite to the doom which threatened existing civilization, and therefore they swear, 'if not by the *genii* of the Caesars, at least by their safety, which is more divine than any *genii*.' But Tertullian[2] refuses to spell 'lord' with a capital 'L' in addressing the emperor, as if he was a substitute for God.

It has often been remarked that St. Paul's favourite metaphors[3] are drawn from the military life, its equipment and its duties. In Eph. vi. every arm of the soldier's equipment is named except the *pilum*, or javelin, a long staff with an iron point, and each is employed metaphorically in a description of the Christian's spiritual armour. His contact with the Praetorian Guards during his imprisonment 'in a hired dwelling,' doubtless on the Palatine Hill, where the Imperial Guards were quartered, enabled him to meet personally a succession of soldiers as they were detailed for the important duty of guarding State prisoners, who were attached to them by a light chain fastened round the wrist; hence his rejoicing that 'throughout the whole Praetorian Guard and everywhere else it is recognized that I am imprisoned on account of my connexion with Christ.'[4]

[1] *Ibid.*, 32. Dr. Souter's trans. is quoted, as elsewhere.

[2] *Ibid.*, 34.

[3] The student will find a complete list of texts in Harnack's *Militia Christi*, together with citations from patristic writers and from Ruinart's *Acta Martyrum Sincera*.

[4] Cf. Phil. i. 13 (Moffatt).

But the profession of arms inevitably raised a question of duty. The early Fathers, Justin, Clement, and Origen, may use metaphors drawn from the language of army life to express what was obviously the truth—the individual Christian was a *miles Christi*, wearing a spiritual armour and waging a spiritual fight against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places as against his own self and the devil and the enemies of the Catholic faith—but it was the practical Tertullian who raised the issue, Can a man serve two masters? Was it right to serve in the army of Caesar and in that of Christ at the same time? His answer was an uncompromising negative: 'There is no agreement between the divine and the human sacrament, the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness.'[1] Doubtless desertions occurred; Christians with a tender conscience would shrink from the test of Caesar-worship, even if they reconciled the soldier's profession with their faith. As a matter of fact, the Christian was a marked man. A soldier who observed the cult of Mithra, or any other god or goddess, had no scruple about paying worship to the emperor. 'The same men,' says R. G. Collingwood of the Roman soldiers in Britain, 'who on church parade, so to speak, offered incense to the emperor and the genius of the fort, would go straight off afterward to a Mithraic mystery or a private sacrifice to Cocidius or Viradecthis'—local Celtic cults.[2]

It is difficult to conjecture to what extent Christianity

[1] Cf. *De Idol.*, xix.

[2] Cf. *Roman Britain*, p. 94.

was represented in the two distinctive sections of the Roman army. It is to be remembered that the regular army, the 'legions,' were recruited from freeborn citizens of good physique, or from provincials of good standing, who in signing on for the twenty-years' service became *ipso facto* citizens. In addition to the regular forces there were the auxiliaries, drawn from various parts of the empire. These were associated with each legion, and composed like a legion of exactly the same number of 6,000 men, though consisting more largely of cavalry or light skirmishing troops. Their standing was parallel to that of native troops in our own Indian army or in the French army. It was a recognized policy not to employ these in their own lands, but elsewhere. Thus German or Austrian troops might be employed in Syria or in Africa. Such was the Thebaid legion shortly to be mentioned, which was chiefly recruited from Syene, Elephantis, and Philae, and attached to the second Trajan legion. The auxiliaries only received the citzenship at the expiration of their time of service. Sometimes we find volunteer detachments on special police duty, like the 'Italian band' under Cornelius in the Acts, or the famous forty martyrs of Sebaste.[1] But it really mattered little if a Christian soldier belonged to the legions or the auxiliaries. Whatever his military status or race, the stronger nature rejected Caesar-worship as a denial of Christ. Take the case of Marcellus, a centurion of the Trajan legion (quartered at Tangiers, in Mauretania, the modern Morocco), who

[1] See *infra.*, p. 170.

refused to recognize the birthday of Maximian, the joint emperor with Diocletian from 286 till 305. He took off his belt at the sight of the standards of the legion and cried, 'I am a soldier of Jesus Christ, the eternal King'; adding as he flung away his vinestick and equipment, 'I have done with fighting for your emperors.'[1] Arrested and brought before the prefect, he was asked, 'Did you say the words in the C.O.'s report?' 'I did.' 'Did you throw away your armour?' 'I did.' When led away to be beheaded he said to the prefect, 'God bless you!'—'the right way to leave the world,' says the old record. Maximian was a notorious foe of Christianity, and bent on stamping out Christianity in the army; as witness the story of Victor,[2] an officer who was tortured, and was dragged, bound hand and foot, through the streets by a rope. All in vain; he stood firm, and his courage moved three soldiers to follow his example. All four were led to death, and a cry was heard, *Vicisti, Victor beate, vicisti.* More astounding still was the sacrifice of a whole cohort, or *vexillatio*, of the Thebaid legion, raised in the Luxor district of Egypt, and probably 600 strong. As they marched down the Rhone valley to Agaune (the modern St. Maurice) they heard that they were under orders to punish the Bagaudae, a band of Celtic marauders in Gaul. Rightly or wrongly, they conceived the idea that this band was a company of fellow Christians, and the whole cohort refused to

[1] See for text Harnack, *Militia Christi*, p. 117 (from Ruinart, *Acta Mart.*, pp. 343 f.)

[2] From the *Passio* of St. Victor, possibly, as suggested by Ruinart, the work of Cassian, Bishop of Autun in A.D. 363. Cf. Holmes, *Christian Church in Gaul*, p. 89.

obey the order. Maximian himself had the cohort isolated and decimated—that is, one out of every ten soldiers was executed. Three officers pleaded in vain for the cohort. A second decimation was ordered. But the survivors stood firm, and at length Maximian ordered the entire cohort to be destroyed.[1]

Such was the type of Christian soldier that made the victory of the Church a certainty. Not that all the emperors were like Maximian. There is the well-known story preserved by Eusebius of the so-called 'Thundering' legion,[2] belonging to the army of Marcus Aurelius when he led them against the Germans and Sarmatians. He who was indifferent to the tragedies that took place in Lyons was startled by the efficacy of Christian prayer. The army was almost fainting for lack of water—it was a season of drought; so, before engaging the enemy, the Christian soldiers of this particular legion, the Melitene, knelt down and prayed for God's help. A storm broke over the fighting forces and put the enemy to flight, while the downfall of rain saved the Roman troops from perishing of thirst. Eusebius repeats[3] a statement of Tertullian to the effect that the emperor, recognizing that the army was saved by the prayer of Christians, 'threatened death to those that attempted to accuse us.'

[1] For the evidence of this story the reader should consult Holmes, *op. cit.* The account of the Thebaid legion is in the *Passio Agaunensium Martyrum*, by Eucherius, Bishop of Lyons, but the story can be traced to Theodore, Bishop of Octodure (Martigny) in 349. On the other hand, Harnack relegates it to the rank of legend. See *Militia Christi*, p. 83.

[2] Really the *legio xii. fulminata Melitensis*. 'Thundering' is a mistake—*fulminata* signifying that the shields of the legion bore the device of Jupiter *fulminator* (wielder of the thunderbolt).

[3] Cf. *H. E.*, v. 5.

Such records show how the legions, especially when recruited (as the Melitene was) from the eastern provinces, where Christianity made swift progress, contained, as Harnack remarks, 'a considerable percentage of Christians.'[1] The protests or opinions of Tertullian, Origen, and Lactantius were in vain. The profession of Christ logically involved the refusal of military service, seeing that Christianity was the religion of peace and prohibited killing. But Christians remained in large numbers in the military service of the empire, and the story[2] of the forty martyrs of Sebaste, in Cappadocia, fitly crowns the glorious annals of fidelity and heroism exhibited by the Christian soldiers, especially in the dark years immediately preceding the imperial recognition of the faith. Forty young men of the military police were condemned to be immersed in a frozen pond all night, while a hot bath was placed in sight, to be used by any whose courage gave out. Only one soldier failed, but his place was taken by the sentry, who, under the influence of pity or a vision, stripped off his clothing and joined those who stood firm. Next day all were flung into the flames. The bystanders sought to break the resolution of one named Melito, younger and more vigorous than the rest; but all in vain, for his mother with her own hands placed him in the executioner's cart, and the youth cheerfully surrendered his life. This was one of the last as it was one of the

[1] Cf. *Mission and Expansion of Christianity* (*M.E.C.*), ii. 55.

[2] See for the original texts, Gebhardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 166 f.; *Testam. SS. xl. Mart. Sebast.*; and also *The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste*, Buckle (Bulletin John Rylands Library, vol. 6, No. 3, July, 1921), for a study of the evidence.

most famous martyrdoms of the terrible years of the persecution. It took place in 320 under Licinius, who three years later was defeated and put to death by his rival, Constantine, henceforth to be sole emperor. Already with the victory of the Milvian bridge the Cross had been affixed to the colours of the imperial regiments, and henceforth Christian and pagan could fight side by side with equal honour and recognition.

The Christian soldiers who preferred death for Christ to the worship of Caesar were greater than they knew. They proved that a healthy conscience is a nobler lever of ethical progress than an easy and accommodating one. They acted upon a sense of duty which no torture, no fear of death, could shake. Says Maximilian, a young recruit, to the proconsul Dion, 'Cut off my head; I do not fight for the world; I fight for my God.' Asked, 'Who urged you to this action?' the reply was, 'My reason and He who called me.'[1] In these days, when the futility of war is being slowly—perhaps too slowly—recognized, we turn back with admiration to read how the Christian soldiers remained loyal to conscience. Peradventure they were the first unwitting apostles of peace. It would appear that the peace movement of which the League of Nations is to-day the political instrument was begun by Christians of the legions quartered in the sunny meadows of the Rhone valley or by the marshes of Cappadocia. In a beautiful passage Clement of Alexandria[2] states that Christ, 'who breathed to the end of the earth a song

[1] Cf. *Acta Max.*, text in Harnack, *M. C.*, p. 115.
[2] Cf. *Protrep.*, xi. 116.

of peace . . . by blood and by word assembled His bloodless army, and to them He entrusted the kingdom of heaven.' It may be ours yet to have to suffer wars and bloodshedding before the vision of universal peace is realized. At least we are called upon to reject the cult of militarism and Caesarism, and to take our stand for righteousness and peace even if it involve martyrdom of the spirit as bitter and painful as the ordeal from which the soldiers of Christ in the imperial army emerged with a deathless glory. This may be the bloodless martyrdom that the present distress calls for from all Christians. Never at least had the will to peace a greater opportunity. Also it has 'great allies . love and man's unconquerable mind.'

III

THE CHRISTIAN IN ORDINARY LIFE

The solidarity of the Christian communities under the fiery ordeal of the persecutions is a wonderful and memorable phenomenon. If apostasy took place—and certain it is throughout the early centuries very many fell away under a test so terrible to average human nature—the issue from the first was never in doubt, so powerful and continuous was the witness of the faithful. It must not be supposed that all who gave their lives were persons of surpassing saintliness. Some great natures there were, but the majority were ordinary people whom the gospel of Jesus had transformed, touching to heroic endurance otherwise undistinguished men, fragile women, and even children, enriching the humble and obscure with a joyous courage, and under the stress of one surpassing experience elevating those of whom the world was not worthy to sublime self-surrender. Christian heroism is not the monopoly of a superior type of humanity; it knows no limitation of social status, education, or race. We are familiar with the vivid touches and unpremeditated art of the Pauline letters, which give us lifelike pictures of Christian character and life in the first generation of Christianity. But were the

characteristics of the New Testament ' saints ' peculiar to that first springtide of beauty and power, or were they typical of the lives of the Christian communities as the Church expanded and spread over the empire? These are questions which we are bound to ask when we close the New Testament and pursue our inquiries beyond its limits in early Christian literature. We have, of course, nothing in the literature that was to follow the New Testament comparable with the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of St. Paul and the other books of the New Testament. The graphic and detailed presentation of the firstfruits of Christian experience afforded by that classic of the faith is without a parallel until we reach a first-hand document like the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. How welcome a Christian contemporary analogue to the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius would be! We have no personal narrative, no autobiography on the scale of the Pauline letters. We have to be content with the hints to be gleaned from non-canonical literature—gospels, apocryphal acts, testaments, mostly fictitious and of little historical value; the genuine works of Christian apologists—Justin, Tatian, Tertullian, Aristides, Minucius Felix, and the others; the writings of the earlier Fathers like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Cyprian, and the invaluable information of the fourth-century historian Eusebius. Nevertheless, from the evidence available we can with some certainty prove that Christianity is in these early centuries a real evangel, a gospel of redemption, a religion of power, of witnessing and fellowship in the ordinary

life of its professors. From the multifarious literature of the first three centuries we can frame an authentic account of the steady progress of the faith. Indeed, this task has already been accomplished by Harnack in his great work *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity* (E. T. by Moffatt), which is a masterly conspectus of all the data for estimating the extension of the faith within the bounds of the empire up to Constantine.

The vast accumulation of papyri has added to our knowledge of the common life of the people, not exclusively but mainly in the province of Egypt during these centuries under review, and perhaps more fully of the period succeeding Constantine. Unhappily the papyri documents which have a specifically Christian reference are relatively few. Deissmann's *Light from the Ancient East* has shown how, in the hands of a competent scholar, the evidence of papyri and ostraca, inscriptions and coins of the ancient world can throw a vivid light on the New Testament language and the many-sided environment of primitive Christianity. But it is chiefly through the actual literature of the period that we can form an impression of the type of Christianity which was practised in ordinary life, not merely under the poignant emotions awakened in the stress of persecutions, but in the general routine of existence, when no conflict with the imperial authorities disturbed the peace of the Church.

In the first place, we must rid ourselves of the idea that there were no Christians of wealth, education, and superior social status. It is true that the faith secured the vast majority of its converts from the lower order

of society[1]; but from the first it attracted those who occupied positions of opulence and distinction in the imperial services and in the upper ranks of society. Such were the distinguished Greek ladies of Thessalonica[2]: Priscilla of Ephesus; Pomponia Graecina, a lady of note, and Domatilla, a consul's wife, both of Domitian's reign; and Marcia, whom Commodus made empress. In the third century Julia Mammaea, a Syrian lady of royal descent, and the Emperor Diocletian's wife and daughter, are accounted either as Christians or in sympathy with Christianity. We have among the converts of St. Paul the pro-consul Sergius of Cyprus, Dionysius of the Areopagus council, Erastus, the city-treasurer of Corinth, and T. Flavius Clemens, consul and husband of the above-named Domatilla. Moreover, the Church, according to Hermas, author of the *Shepherd*, had a class of wealthy business men who, by the nature of their calling, lived on terms of friendship with the pagans. This author's mentality and standard of life were severely simple, and he may have taken a too narrow view of their worldly tendencies. Marcion and Valentinus the Gnostics, who were, it is true, heterodox types of Christianity; the two pupils of Valentinus, Ptolemaeus and Heracleon[3]; the orthodox apologists, Tatian, the author of the *Oration to the Greeks*, Aristides, who addressed his defence of Christians to Hadrian,

[1] Frankly acknowledged by the apologists. Cf. Min. Felix, *Oct.* 36; *quod plerique pauperes dicimur, non est infamia nostra sed gloria* ('That most of us are said to be poor is not our shame, but our glory').

[2] Cf. Acts xvii. 4.

[3] Ptolemaeus wrote a letter to a lady inquirer called Flora on the law of Moses, which shows him to have been a man of remarkable philosophic gifts, while Heracleon wrote a commentary on St. John's Gospel.

Athenagoras, Minucius Felix, and others, were obviously men of learning and culture. Also there is the notable case of Apollonius, probably a senator, certainly a man of culture and trained in philosophy, for whom the Emperor Commodus had a real regard. The story of his martyrdom following on his resistance of the friendly efforts of Perennius the prefect to save him from the capital sentence, and his noble apology for the faith is a document of extraordinary interest. 'I would fain let thee go,' said the magistrate, 'but I cannot because of the Senate's decree, but yet with benevolence I pronounce sentence on thee.'[1] He ordered him to be beheaded instead of sentencing him to be thrown to the wild beasts or some other equally shocking form of death. From this time forward, if we may trust the glowing rhetoric of Tertullian, the court, the Senate, and the forum were adorned by numbers of distinguished Christians. Nevertheless, it was the glory of Christianity that it reached not only the freeman but the slave, not only the State official but the artisan, the shopkeeper, and the lower grades of citizenship.

If we try to imagine the Christian home we have to take as our starting-point the hints we find in Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria. The former bears strong testimony to the purity of the Christian home-life in the striking statement, 'Among us all things are common except wives.'[2] Allowing for Tertullian's rhetorical manner, we cannot but believe that here

[1] See translation of the *Apology and Acts of Apollonius* in Conybeare, *Monuments of Early Christianity*, pp. 35–48.

[2] Cf. *Apol.*, 39.

we have a lurid light on the domestic life of paganism. The Christian doctrine of the equality of the sexes and of the sanctity and resurrection of the body was a great advance on the prevailing conception of the relation of the sexes; but while the principle was a real gain, it cannot be said that it bore the fruit that might have been expected. As a matter of fact, the ascetic temper of early Christianity tended to narrow the scope of woman's influence, and there was nothing in Christian circles to correspond with the freedom enjoyed by the Roman ladies of the late republic and early empire. Undoubtedly owing to the influence of St. Paul's teaching woman was not encouraged to render public service in the Church. We hear, it is true, of a 'deaconess' in the Church of Cenchreae, and later of prophetesses, the four daughters of Philip, and later on still of a class of helpers called 'widows' and 'deaconesses.' But we have no evidence that these represented a regular or official order in Church organization, and in any case their public functions were severely restricted. Finally, a class of virgins came to take the place of widows. The change eloquently illustrates the superior respect in which the Church was henceforth to hold virginity and also celibacy as compared with the marriage relationship. The heretical Christian sects allowed greater spiritual freedom to women than the Church, but it is to be noted that Tertullian, on becoming a Montanist, rejected the Montanist rule in relation to women, and forbade them to speak, teach, baptize, and exercise

other functions belonging to the priestly office. The fact is, the Church could not make up its mind whether to uphold or disparage the marriage-tie. The New Testament and the apostolic Fathers give exhortation to wives and husbands to live in chastity, and to bring up children in the fear of God.[1] But later on the language used by the Christian teachers is depreciatory of the married life as compared with the unmarried.[2] A marriage between Christians is commended as an opportunity of mutual love, service, and comfort ; but the wife has to live a secluded life as a housekeeper, providing meals and doing other household duties ; at the same time she has to care for and educate her children.

If wives appear in public, it is either to endure martyrdom or to support their husbands or children under that trial, to dress the wounds of the tortured, and to pray with them. A wife can attend church in company with her husband with veiled face, but must on no account frequent public shows and assemblies and be before the public eye.[3] It is clear, then, that the distinction between clergy and laity and the asceticism of Christian thought and practice were factors which tended to degrade the conception of marriage,[4] and therewith the status of womanhood. Mediaeval chivalry was really a protest against the

[1] Cf., e.g., *Didachē*, iv. 9.

[2] Cf. Tertullian, *Ad Ux.*, i. 3 and i. 5 for his views against a second marriage for widows.

[3] Cf. Clem. Alex., *Paed.*, III. xi. 79, and Tertullian, *De Cult. Fem.*, II. ii.

[4] It is fair to note, however, that Clement does not emphasize the distinction between clergy and laity, and actually defends marriage as superior to celibacy (cf. *Strom.*, vii. 70) while at the same time he commends a sane enkrateia for all.

position which the tradition of the Church had assigned to woman. From the days of the Reformation there has been a steady advance[1] in the direction of saner and more Christian views, both in regard to married and unmarried women. The striking recognition during the last generation of the influence of womanhood as a moral force in public life, in social, political, and religious activities, is one of the happiest and most promising of all modern movements.

Again, the ecclesiastical depreciation of marriage indirectly made against a real understanding of child-life. 'The Christian,' says Donaldson,[2] 'had come to the belief that the world had enough of children, and was fully stocked, and that every birth was a cause of sorrow and not of joy'; and he quotes the words with which Tertullian disparages the desire for offspring, on the ground that when we have children we desire to send them before us out of this wicked world from which we ourselves desire to be delivered. If there was a tendency to emphasize the responsibility rather than the joy of having children, we must, on the other hand, remember that the child had been placed in the centre of the Church by the incarnation and teaching of Jesus. There is no need to dwell on this truth. Suffice to say the immediate effect was that the child received new rights. Abortion and

[1] See A. Dorner, art. 'Emancipation,' *E. R. E.*

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 180, and cf. Tertullian, *Ad Ux.*, i. 5. On the other hand, Glover, *Conflict of Religions*, remarks on Tertullian's real tenderness of heart, e.g. in the references to his dead wife and the ways of little children (cf. pp. 308, 314). He mentions, further, his treatment of the fatherhood of God based on the parables of the lost sheep and prodigal son in *De Paenitentia* 8, which, he says, 'might surprise some of his critics.' It is, indeed, like the application of a modern evangelistic sermon.

exposure were absolutely forbidden. Obedience and reverence to parents are inculcated. Moreover—it is a significant addition—fathers are enjoined by St. Paul not to provoke their children to anger. No Christian father henceforth was to regard his child as a slave and chattel. Unfortunately, we have no pictures of Christian home-life in the second and third centuries. In the fourth century we have the ever-memorable portrait of Monica, the mother of Augustine. Though it would be going too far to regard her as typical, at least she embodies a new ideal of maternal solicitude unknown to paganism. She, with her sisters, had been trained by an aged and faithful Christian nurse who had once carried the child's father in her arms. Married to Patricius, who was merely a nominal Christian, she laboured to win first her husband and then her son to the service of Christ. The story lies outside the period under review, and cannot here be retold in detail; but it is notable for the vivid light it throws on many aspects of the Christian domestic life of the middle of the fourth century. There is, e.g., the scene in which there is a kind of council of mothers—friends of Monica whose faces showed the marks of blows inflicted by husbands 'even more humane' than her own[1]—and Monica in the midst urging upon them her own methods of tactful self-restraint. But her wild son was to try her patient spirit even more; his blasphemies she loathed so deeply that she declined to meet him at table[2]; but this resolve was abandoned as the result of a

[1] Cf. *Conf.*, ix. 9 (*mansuetiores*). [2] Cf. *Conf.*, iii. 11.

vision and the kindly words of a bishop : ' The son of thy tears cannot perish.' Apart from her yearning for the spiritual welfare of her son, her efforts to secure for him the highest education, even if it involved tuition under non-Christian teachers, is a magnificent proof of her insight, based as it was on the conviction that the more his intellect was enlightened, the more likely was he to arrive at the truth. We know next to nothing of the methods pursued in the education of Christian children during the second and third centuries, but there is no reason to doubt that parents undertook the religious training of their children, and taught them the love of Christ and the laws of the Christian life. No longer could the children be handed over to the care of slaves. The manner of Clement's *Paedagogus* is too allegorical to furnish any real guidance in this connexion, inasmuch as he treats of the Christian life generally, as a childhood or sonship under the tutelage of the divine Logos. But his second and third books are more practical, in that they offer precepts for the conduct of the Christian life in the environment with which he is familiar. Alexandria is Clement's world, as Carthage is Tertullian's. Simplicity in matters of food, as opposed to the habits of vulgar luxury, and restraint in deportment, speech, and dress, are set forth with a disregard for reticence and a directness of detail foreign to our ideas ; but we look in vain for a picture of home-life and the ways of a Christian family, especially as regards the care of child-life and child-education. And it is not until the middle of the fourth century

that we have the sermons of the Presbyter of Antioch, afterwards Bishop of Constantinople, the famous preacher John Chrysostom, who in season and out of season pleaded for a higher standard of Christian ethics in the life of the home and other spheres of duty. Here are a few sentences from the homily on 1 Tim. ii. 11–15: 'In children we have a great charge committed to us . . . we take care of our possessions for our children, but of the children themselves we take no care at all. What an absurdity is this! Form the soul of thy son aright, and all the rest will be added hereafter. . . . Wouldst thou leave him rich? Teach him to be good.'

The Christian is warned in the clearest terms against the allurements of the games and shows by Tertullian, of course, but with equal firmness if in more restrained language by Clement. For Clement, however ready to welcome whenever possible in the philosophy of the classic world a spiritual purpose and source, shows no spirit of accommodation in the matters of Christian conduct. He pronounces, for example, against games of chance, on the ground that they foster a love of gain and frivolities, and their use is only for the idle; and he forbids attendance at spectacles and 'plays that are full of scurrility and of abundant gossip.'[1] If these precepts seem to be rather negative than positive, it is difficult to conceive how it could be otherwise when the Christian was living in daily contact with the degrading laxity of pagan life. But

[1] Cf. *Paed.*, III. xi. 77: *ἀκροάματα βωμολοχίας καὶ σπερμολογίας πολλῆς γέμοντα.*

he certainly did not practise a monastic seclusion or deliberate aloofness from his fellows, however depraved. To use Tertullian's phrase,[1] Christians were 'neither Brahmins nor Indian gymnosophists, dwellers in forests and exiles from ordinary life.' They were to be found in the market-place, at the baths and the shambles, in shops, factories, taverns, fairs, and other places of resort. They engaged in trade, served in the army and on board ship, and practised crafts. They held aloof from pagan rites; but they were human beings, living a healthy normal life. They wore no garlands and had no perfumed locks, bought no incense for 'fumigating the gods,' even if they used it at the burial of their dead. Certainly they were poor customers for such wares, and they did not swell the revenues of the temples. Mendicant gods—a Jupiter holding out a hand for alms—they did not support; their compassion had sufficient scope in the streets. If Christians are unprofitable, the complaint comes from procurers, pimps, bullies, assassins, poisoners, magicians, diviners, soothsayers, and astrologers. But they help the State none the less, seeing that they are not found in the prisons, in the mines, and among the criminals for whom the public shows are provided. 'No one there,' he adds, 'is a Christian unless he is nothing but a Christian; or if he be also anything else, he is already no longer a Christian.'[2]

So Tertullian, the first of the Latin Christian writers, a master of biting irony and invective, a believer in

[1] Cf. *Apol.*, 42.

[2] Cf. *Apol.*, 44.

eternal punishment and the fear of it as an incentive to Christian consistency, with a narrow conception of duty and a fiery intolerance of paganism and all its works, having no use for its philosophy, because its teachers were men of lax ethics, believing that the truth he preached had a far more ancient origin—in this respect one with other apologists and with Clement —and that if there was any virtue in Greek thought, it was borrowed from the 'mysteries'[1] of the Old Testament. Yet we can hardly deny that such a mind, with its uncompromising division of the world into black and white, was, by its very admixture of strength and weakness, more likely to impress the average Christian of his age than the type of mind which might be more tolerant and balanced and yet be wanting in the stern zeal and ethical insight which marks the true prophet.

One thing is clear: from the very beginning Christianity won its way to recognition by the witness of a vast company of average people, 'not many mighty, not many high-born,' anonymous and obscure individuals, vessels of earth although holding a divine treasure, natures perhaps fanatical, imperfectly enlightened and restricted in their outlook upon life, yet loyal at all costs to the truth as they conceived it. 'Among us,' says Athenagoras,[2] author of a defence of the faith couched in the elegant Greek diction of a cultivated writer and addressed to the

[1] Cf. *Apol.*, 4, 7: *de nostris sacramentis*. Cf. Minucius Felix (34, § 4), who expresses it as *de praedicationibus prophetarum* (cited by J. E. B. Mayor, *loc. cit.*).

[2] Cf. *Supplicatio*, C. xi.

Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, 'you will find uneducated persons and artisans and old women, who if they are unable in words to prove the benefit of our doctrine, yet by their deeds exhibit the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth; they do not rehearse speeches but exhibit good words; when struck, they do not strike again; when robbed, they do not go to law; they give to those that ask of them and love their neighbours as themselves.' By such fruits—the harvest of the Sermon on the Mount—the faith put its adversaries to shame and commended itself to the common soul of man 'as it spread over all the world with fruit and increase.'[1]

Only a reference is needed here to the well-known facts of the early Christian attitude to death and the treatment of the dead. Death was no longer regarded with sullen and joyless fatalism. The pagan practice of cremation was abandoned, and owing to the new belief in the resurrection, and in imitation of the burial of the Lord, the body was placed in a grave. At Rome during the first three centuries the dead were laid in the Catacombs,[2] but in other parts of the empire ordinarily in *areae*, or burying-places. Many of the extant inscriptions of the Catacombs are instinct with immortal hope, such as 'Alexander is not dead, but lives above the stars, and his body rests in the tomb.' In the bas-reliefs of the Catacombs the familiar symbol of the Good Shepherd with the lamb on His shoulder suggested security, peace, and

[1] Cf. Col. i. 6.

[2] See *I. E. C. H.*, p. 65, for an account of the Catacombs.

an eternal protection. But, on the other hand, in the provinces of Asia extant inscriptions of Christians cannot be distinguished from pagan epitaphs. 'Sepulchral custom changes slowly, and it was only gradually that the Asian Christians adopted the use of formulae which were different from those used by their pagan neighbours'[1]—a fact eloquent of the widespread unwillingness to make an avowal of Christianity which would attract the notice of the pagans. When Constantine legalized Christianity all was changed. In the epitaphs of the fourth century found in Asia Minor, 'By Christians to Christians' was a common formula. Prudentius, who wrote in the early fifth century some noble lyrics on death, is expressing the spirit which had prevailed from the earliest days of the Church, when, in contrast with the pagan habit of unavailing grief and even resentment against the angry gods, he writes:

> Jam maesta quiesce querela,
> lacrimas suspendite matres,
> nullus sua pignora plangat,
> mors haec reparatio vitae est.[2]

> Hushed be your voices, ye that mourn.
> Ye weeping mothers, dry the tear;
> Let none lament for children dear,
> For man through Death to Life is born.

Nor did they weave any fading crown or garland for the heads of their dead; partly because the use of

[1] Cf. W. M. Calder, *Philadelphia and Montanism* (Bulletin John Rylands Library, Vol. 7. No. 3, August, 1923) for a profoundly interesting study of Christian epigraphy of the pre-Constantinian period in Asia Minor.

[2] Cf. *Cath.*, x. 116 f. Trans. by R. F. Davis in *Hymns of Prudentius*, p. 119.

crowns was associated with idolatry and partly because they looked for an undying crown at the hands of God—*coronam . . . aeternis floribus vividam,* as Minucius Felix puts it when expounding the faith of the Christians in the future bliss based on their assurance of God's present power; adding, 'Thus both our death is blest by our rising again and our life by the contemplation of the future.'[1]

[1] Cf. Min. Fel. *Oct.*, 38.

IV

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE PRACTICE OF THE DEVOUT LIFE

When we pass from the New Testament to the consideration of the evidence for the inner life of the Church in the second century, we carry with us the picture of young Christian communities which have already attained some firmness of organization and a recognized discipline. Even if we take the view that the Pastoral Epistles are substantially non-Pauline documents, and belong to a date subsequent to the apostle's death, nevertheless these letters depict a development of Church life and order such as we might expect from evidence presented by the letters usually admitted to be Pauline. As we have already noted, the early Church began as a group of loosely constructed communities on a democratic basis. Next they are found to be under the government of officials, called presbyters or elders. The appointment of the *episcopus* to be chief of the presbyters led naturally, in course of time, to a monarchical form of government under the local bishop, which became normal in the second century. But what we are more interested in is not the development of official administration, but the inner life of the community, its worship and

devotional acts, and the development of Christian thought from primitive belief to more or less articulated doctrine.

The earliest reference to Christian worship in the non-Christian literature is the familiar statement of Pliny, the imperial *legatus* in Bithynia, that it was the habit of the Christians to assemble on a fixed day before dawn and sing by turns a hymn to Christ as a god; that they then bound themselves with an oath (*sacramento*), not for the commission of any crime, but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and denial of a just legal claim; that thereupon they separated, and met together again to take food which was ordinary and harmless.[1] We learn that as the result of an edict issued by Pliny against *hetairiae*,[2] they gave up this custom of a common meal. The date of Pliny's letter can be exactly fixed to the year 110. Probably the Christians of Bithynia met for a religious service open to all comers in the morning, while in the evening the inner circle of baptized persons partook together of a common meal, which apparently was an *agapē* (or love-feast) and eucharist in one. Hence, while the Christians of Bithynia formed what may be called an unlicensed *collegium*, they were afraid lest they might be regarded as an *hetairia*; that is to say, as one of those social clubs

[1] Cf. Pliny, Epp. x. 96.

[2] For this Greek word the Latin synonym was *collegia sodalicia*; that is, clubs formed for providing burial expenses or for mutual assistance, their meetings taking the form of feasting or recreation. They are not to be confounded with *collegia opificum*, which were not unlike our trades unions, guilds of the smaller industries—wood-carriers, porters, smiths, &c. Cf. Hardy's *Studies in Roman History* (first series), whose views on the whole rather complex subject are based on the most careful research.

which Trajan desired to suppress on the ground that as associations for religious objects and common meals they might become gatherings for political objects. Hence it would appear that when Pliny's edict appeared, the Christians abandoned their evening meal, in order to disarm suspicion. It is clear, however, that the edict did not apply to their position as an unlicensed association for general religious purposes, but only to the particular element of a common meal, which was an essential part of the *hetairia*. From the first the Christian community had a general resemblance to the large number of *collegia*, or clubs for religious purposes, or for purchasing burying-grounds, and defraying funeral expenses (*funeraticia*). As most of these were *collegia tenuiorum*, or associations of the lower orders of society, they would attract very little notice in ordinary times. The attitude of emperors toward them varied. Trajan was prejudiced, while a century later Alexander Severus was indulgent towards them. It was only when the Christians were marked out by their attitude to the religious customs and rites of the empire as enemies of the State, and therefore were regarded, not only as atheists, but as anarchists, that they brought down upon themselves the suspicion and persecution of the Roman Government. Otherwise as local *collegia* on a religious basis, even though unlicensed, they would have attracted no particular notice.

In all probability the earlier form of Christian worship, though not fixed nor uniform, contained the main elements of the synagogue worship, public

prayer, reading and exposition of Scriptures, and benediction. The singing of hymns, which were the psalms of the Old Testament or Christianized psalms like the *Odes of Solomon*, was a distinctive feature; but the chief factor was corporate prayer. The worship was essentially spiritual; the word 'sacrifice' is only used of offerings brought by the worshippers for the eucharist; and if the word 'altar' is employed, it is applied as a metaphor to persons devoted to prayer and good works, such as the 'widows.'[1] From the first the prayer of thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) was used in the hallowing of the elements, bread and wine, of the common feast of the worshipper; but very early, as we see from its use by Ignatius, the term 'eucharist' came to be applied to the service as a whole; it may be called a common commemorative service of praise leading up to the eucharist proper. At first the eucharist was combined with a social meal called a love-feast (agapē), which expressed the spiritual unity of the whole community. Then by degrees the agapē was separated from the eucharist, and became either a common supper, provided most likely by the rich, or a feast commemorative of a departed saint given by the relatives in his honour, or a feast provided by rich people in honour of a martyr. Thus there were ordinary love-feasts and commemorative love-feasts. The custom was never quite universal; certainly it was only of partial adoption during the first four centuries. The evidence of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Cyprian makes it

[1] Cf. Polycarp, *Ad Phil.*, iv.: *εἰσὶ θυσιαστήριον Θεοῦ.*

clear that the eucharist had become the central feature of the morning worship of the Church.[1] The famous passage of Justin Martyr's *Apology*[2] presents us with the characteristic features of a second-century service held in a private house or meeting-place in the Catacombs; for there is no evidence of distinctive buildings set apart for Christian worship until we reach the post-Nicene age. These features are the reading of 'the memoirs of the apostles and writings of the prophets' and an expository discourse by the 'president'; after which the congregation rises to prayer. Then comes the holy kiss with which we 'salute each other.' Next bread and wine are brought in; the president then 'sends up' (or offers) the eucharistic or thanksgiving prayer over the elements, which are then distributed to each worshipper. Each worshipper, as he receives, offers a personal thanksgiving, while portions are set aside for the absent, to be carried to them by the deacons.

Later on Irenaeus was to express a conception similar to Justin's of the essential meaning of sacrifice. It is true that his interpretation marks an advance on Justin's view of the consecrated elements; for while Justin deemed that the bread and wine were no longer 'common food' after the eucharistic prayer, Irenaeus[3] considered that the earthly elements had received a heavenly element or reality which imparted life to the participant. Nevertheless, he clearly

[1] Cf., for evidence, art. by Maclean, 'Agape,' *E. R. E.* Also the art. 'Worship (Christian),' by Dr. V. Bartlet, *E. R. E.*

[2] Cf. LXVII.

[3] Cf. *Adv. Haer.*, iv. 8. 5.

indicates that the virtue of the eucharist lies in the inner disposition of the worshipper. It was not the material gift that sanctified a man, but the conscience of the man who offered the gift to God[1]; it is the lifting up of the heart to God, as indicated by the very early eucharistic call, *Sursum corda* ('Upwards your hearts'), which is the real sacrifice. It is not till we come to Cyprian that we note the emergence of a conception of the eucharistic elements which was to revolutionize the pure and simple thinking of the early Christians. To him the sacrifice which we offer is the passion of the Lord; with this principle as the basis of his thought it was but a logical and simple deduction that the Lord Himself was objectively present and offered in the wine and bread as a propitiatory sacrifice. No longer is the rite simply a sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, and a commemoration of the dying love of the Redeemer, which refreshes the soul and ministers grace to the spiritual life as 'the medicine of immortality' (to use the striking phrase of Ignatius).[2] The eucharist tends more and more to approximate to the 'Catholic' conception of the Mass, or sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, who was considered to be not symbolically but really present in the sacred elements. If the elements were described in the language frequently used by the writers of the fourth century as 'symbols' (*antitupa*) of the body and blood, the term 'symbol,' as Harnack notes, conveyed in those days the suggestion that

[1] Cf. *ibid.*, iv. 17. 1, 18. 3 ('It is the conscience of the offerer that sanctifies the sacrifice when it is pure').

[2] Cf. Ignatius, *Ad Ephes.*, 20.

'the really heavenly element lay either in or behind the visible form without being identical with it.' It is clear that the thought of the Church from this time forward, under the influence of sacramental ideas of pagan cults, tended to externalize the rite as a 'mystery,' or *opus operatum*, and regarded the elements as 'transformed' by priestly efficacy into something they were not. The liturgies which were current in the fourth century show that these advanced ideas had already found their way, more markedly in the East than in the West, into the language used in the celebration of the eucharist.

Christianity took over from Judaism the rite of baptism, transforming it into an act which involved the open confession that Jesus was Lord and was recognized as the seal of a divine adoption or unction and resulting fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The evidence of the New Testament is concerned almost entirely with adult baptism. This is what we might expect in a new missionary movement, in which, in the first instance, the question of baptizing children would not arise. But inasmuch as the rite of admission into the new covenant was regarded as superseding the circumcision of the old, it is probable that the Jewish principle of the equal share of father and sons in the blessings of the covenant was maintained, and that the new spiritual status of the Christian parent applied equally to the members of the family, who were regarded, not as a collection of individuals, but as a unity. At first, baptism was '*into the name of* Jesus Christ,' a formula which implies proprietorship, and was used

to describe any solemn or binding act of submission or respect, e.g. in an appeal to the person of a king, or the military oath of allegiance. The baptismal formula recorded in Matt. xxviii. 19 probably was the later formula. At all events it is the trinitarian formula which is cited as normal in the first authoritative account of Christian baptism, that occurs in the second century, namely the *Apology* of Justin Martyr (61 ff.). Justin alludes to a period of instruction preceding baptism—instruction, too, apparently in the articles of a creed—and then proceeds to give his view of the rite. Undoubtedly his words leave the impression that he regarded baptism as a means of regeneration, forgiveness of past sin, and the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Irenaeus appears to hold the same view. Tertullian gives in three sentences (*De Corona*, 3) an interesting picture of the actual ceremony, which he describes as customary and in harmony with tradition. 'A little before we enter the water in the church, under the hand of the president, we solemnly testify that we renounce the devil[1] and his pomp and his angels. Thereupon we are thrice immersed, making a somewhat fuller response than the Lord laid down in the gospel. Then, when we have been taken up, we taste a mixture of honey and milk, and from that day we refrain from the daily bath for a whole week.'

From statements elsewhere in Tertullian's writings

[1] For *renuntiatio diaboli*, evidently a vital element of the sacrament, cf. *De Spect.*, 4. The act was tantamount to the rejection of idolatry and worship of demons; in fact, the whole system of pagan worship and public shows, art, drama, and sport.

we learn that the minister was usually a bishop or one of the presbyters or deacons acting on his authority, but the right to baptize could be exercised by any Christian layman (but not a woman). He clearly held what we call to-day 'high' views of baptism; for he believed that the water cleansed the body from sin, and that the *responsio* or answer of the candidate cleansed the soul, while the laying on of hands endowed him with the gift of the Spirit. The baptized really experienced a resurrection and transformation through the name and the water. He believed that sin after baptism was unforgivable,[1] or expiable only by martyrdom or by 'fire,' whatever that meant. Hence he objected to baptism as perilous for children, the unmarried, and widows. These views were characteristic of Tertullian's extreme and peculiar theology, but we cannot doubt that they were accepted by thousands of contemporary Christians, especially in the province of Africa. It is clear that here, as also in the case of the eucharist, the mind and practice of the Church had advanced beyond the teachings of the New Testament, and especially the Pauline Epistles,[2] whose doctrine implies no magical conception of baptism. It ought in fairness to be added that this opinion is strenuously combated by writers like Kirsopp Lake, Loisy, and others, who discover traces of a much larger influence of mystery-sacraments in Pauline and other scriptures

[1] Cf. the passages ii. 1–4, iii. 12, iv. 11, vi. 4–12, x. 19–31 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which to some commentators can only bear this interpretation.

[2] See above, p. 90.

of the New Testament than is allowed by rival interpreters.[1]

A striking feature of early Church life was its *practical charity*. From the first the law of fellowship imposed upon the members of the Christian society the duty, not only of helping one another, but of supporting needy fellow Christians in times of stress, even if they were resident in a distant locality. Thus St. Paul, in the famous and almost abrupt sequel to his sublime utterance on immortality, gives instruction about a Lord's day collection for the poor of Jerusalem. Possibly these were Christian Jews who, on espousing the name of Christ, could no longer depend on the bounty of their fellow Jews; or they may have suffered poverty owing to famine, rebellion, and extortion of successive procurators. 'Let each one of you lay by him in store as he may prosper, and this on each first day of the week, that no collection be made when I come'—a hint which delicately indicates his desire not to be supposed to have made any personal claim in his own interest and behalf. He never took any monetary assistance himself from the Corinthian Church.[2] There were sometimes local circumstances that made against the complete success of this relief-scheme, which was dear to the apostle's heart; but these were only temporary and did not affect the principle of 'equality,'[3] which he sought to inculcate as the aim of the individual Christian in

[1] Notably Schweitzer in his *Paul and His Interpreters*, English trans., pp. 192 f.

[2] Cf. art. 'Collection,' Hastings' *Dict. of the Apostolic Church*.

[3] Cf. 2 Cor. viii. 14.

relation with his fellows—equality alike of spiritual privilege and the enjoyment of material benefits. Wealth had a duty to poverty which in Christ's name could never be neglected. The practice thus initiated was maintained as a distinctive feature of the Christian community. Tertullian[1] makes a point of the voluntary monthly gift, contributed by each brother only if he was willing and able; and he mentions the objects to which the fund is devoted, viz. the support and burying of the poor, the penniless and orphan boys and girls, aged domestic servants, shipwrecked persons, and those who, in the cause of God's religion, are in mines, islands, or prisons. Justin,[2] in his account of the Lord's-day worship, records that a collection was made regularly in support of orphans, widows, and those who through sickness or any other cause were in want.

The duty of fasting appears to have been enjoined as a general rule for the individual to follow, but so far as we can gather it is not till the fourth century that it became a *regulation* for stated occasions, e.g. in the forty days of Lent preceding Easter. On the other hand, a day's or two days' fast was part of the discipline of the candidate for baptism, as we learn from the *Didachē* and Justin; half-fasts were also customary from early times on Wednesdays and Fridays; further, certain days (varying from a week in duration to shorter periods) preceding Easter were observed as days of fasting. The *Shepherd* of

[1] Cf. *Apol.*, 39.

[2] Cf. also letter of Dionysius of Corinth to the Romans in Euseb., *H. E.*, iv. 23.

Hermas records the term *statio* for a fast, and Tertullian[1] uses the expression 'the days of stations,' and mentions that the term *statio* is a military term, with a special significance for 'God's military.' With these weekly fasts of Wednesdays and Fridays was connected the 'vigil,' or evening service, held also on the eves of holy days like the Lord's Day or Easter.

We have to wait till the fourth century before we find regulations for stated 'hours' of prayers. Up to that time there were no distinctive rules or written *forms* of devotion, nor hymn-books like that which was, according to Jerome, composed by Hilary of Poitiers (died 358), or the later collection which Ambrose wrote for the Church of Milan. But Cyprian mentions that 'besides the hours observed from ancient times' (he means the 'apostolic'[2] or three hours—the third, the sixth, and the ninth—observed by the apostles and taken over from Judaism), 'both seasons and sacraments of prayer have become more numerous'[3] and refers especially to prayer in the early morning before work, and late at night, outside the apostolic three. It is clear that we have here the beginnings of that rigid devotional order of the day which in its earliest forms was fostered by the asceticism of certain types of saintliness like the 'virgins' (of both sexes), and became ultimately the rule or

[1] *De orat.*, xix.

[2] Cf. Dan. vi. 10; Ps. lv. 17; Acts iii. 1, x. 9; *Did.* 8, and for further details art. 'Worship (Christian),' *E. R. E.*, by Dr. V. Bartlet.

[3] Cf. *De Orat. Dom.*, 35. *Orandi nunc et spatia et sacramenta creverunt.* Apparently he means by *sacramenta* occasions of prayer with a special spiritual reference, e.g. morning prayer to commemorate the Resurrection, evening prayer for the Second Coming of Christ.

regula of the monastic life in the fifth and later centuries.

How far did art enter into the religious life of early Christianity? It was not ignored to the extent that some have imagined. Tertullian's condemnation of idolatry meant that he was opposed to the making of an image which might become an object of worship; but he only rejected the gift of artist and craftsman if exercised in relation to pagan religion. We have no reason to suppose that even the most puritanical Christian left his dwelling-house undecorated or bare; in this respect he would not break with ordinary customs of his environment. But our clearest proof of the interest of Christianity in art is shown by the extant examples of decorative art in the burial-places. The Christian artist, under the glamour of the new hope of immortality, was chiefly concerned to adorn the tombs of the departed with paintings symbolic of faith and hope. There was, however, nothing distinctive in method; the paintings follow the classical tradition; hence in the Catacombs we find conventional figures like Cupids and Psyches, and winged genii engaged in the vintage-harvest. The favourite symbolism on these frescoes was drawn from Old Testament subjects; but New Testament incidents become more frequent after the formation of the New Testament canon. Christ is usually represented as the Good Shepherd, with a lamb over His shoulders, or as an Orpheus tending his sheep and playing on the syrinx (or panpipe).[1] The raising of Lazarus was

[1] Cf. Lowrie, *Christian Art and Archaeology*, p. 219.

a favourite theme, and the figure of a female praying (*orans*) with arms upturned is a common device. The remarkable fact is that up to the Peace of the Church the cross as an emblem finds no place in the Christian art of the Catacombs; indeed, it is not found before A.D. 370.[1] Representations of suffering, whether of the Saviour or the martyr-saints, are notably absent in the period in which persecution was rife. The prevailing notes up to the fourth century are love, hope, joy, healing, resurrection. If the few last scenes of the Saviour's life are depicted, the treatment dwells, not on the aspect of anguish, but on that of victory. The march to Calvary becomes a triumphal process, with the cross borne forward on a banner; the crowning with thorns is envisaged as a royal honour.[2] It was reserved for Latin Catholicism to express in art the apotheosis of death and sorrow in the realism of the crucifix and of mediaeval art, while the art of the Byzantine age, and of Eastern Christianity generally, has shown the opposite tendency of glorifying only the Living or Risen Christ.

[1] See Arthur Gray in *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1922, 'The Last Chapter of St. John's Gospel interpreted by Christian Art.'

[2] Cf. Baldwin Brown in 'Art (Christian)' *E. R. E.*

V

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS CREED

In a passage already quoted Justin Martyr definitely states that baptism was intended for ' as many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to live accordingly.' The phrasing suggests that by the second century the Church had something of the nature of a creed as the basis of its catechetical teaching. This is understood to be the *Symbolum Romanum*, or old Roman Creed, which took shape perhaps two generations after the apostles. The earliest simple creed, ' Jesus is Lord,' was expanded, as we have seen, into the baptismal formula of the triple Name. The probability is that the necessity and practice of Christian instruction created a demand for a larger formula, and that a catechist of the Roman Church brought out the symbol which is described by Tertullian as the rule of faith (*regula fidei*). This is how he gives it[1]: it is the rule of ' believing in one only God omnipotent, the Creator of the universe, and His only Son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised again the third

[1] Cf. arts. ' Confessions ' (Curtis) and ' Creed (Christian) ' (A. E. Brown) in *E. R. E.* Cf. *De Virg. Velandis*, i., and further *De Praes. Haer.*, 13. Irenaeus, *c. Haer.*, I. x. 1, records an interesting confession not unlike Tertullian's—notably as regards the omission of a definite reference to the Holy Spirit.

day, received in the heavens, sitting now at the right hand of the Father, destined to come to judge quick and dead through the resurrection also[1] of the flesh.' In the fuller form recorded in Latin and Greek by Rufinus (d. A.D. 410) and Marcellus of Ancyra (*flor. cir.* 350) there are added after the words about the judgement of quick and dead the following: 'And in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Church; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; (the life everlasting).' The final form, as we have it to-day, of the Apostles' Creed is not found till the eighth century. It is probable that there were Eastern types of the primitive symbol of the Church of Rome, and Zahn reconstructs a Creed of Antioch running on the same lines as Tertullian's.

The evidence thus briefly summarized enables us to gauge the general character of the Church's formula of belief up to A.D. 300. It is not possible to trace in detail the stages in the development of Christian thought, as presented by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, who are the outstanding theologians, as Cyprian is the outstanding churchman of the pre-Nicene period. Tertullian and Hippolytus likewise merit the title of theologian, but Tertullian's vigorous intellect and rhetorical passion shone rather in destructive criticism of Marcionism and other forms of Gnostic thought than in a constructive statement of the Christian faith; he is powerful as a polemical thinker, as a vigorous apologist, a Christian legalist, and a preacher of a peculiarly rigid standard of

[1] Meaning as well as of the spirit.

Christian conduct and practice. Hippolytus, whose massive erudition is incompletely represented by the fragmentary works that are extant, stands in the succession of Irenaeus in founding his theology on the Scriptures and reveals a reaction against Hellenism, which he regarded as the source of current heresies. Not much of theological value is to be found in the so-called *Clementine* (or *pseudo-Clementine*) *Recognitions and Homilies*, which in the form in which they have reached us belong to the early third century; but Harnack,[1] who assigns this date to them, regards them as essentially Jewish Christian in standpoint, the works of authors who are without any fixed theology, but are not heretical; rather honest Catholics who for purposes of edification sought to 'oppose Greek polytheism, immoral mythology, and false philosophy' in what we may describe as a set of pious romances.

If we may summarize the evolution of the faith as we look at it from the standpoint of the patristic writers, the victory over Gnosticism saved Christianity from becoming a purely Hellenistic religion, in which the conception of an Almighty Creator and Redeemer would have evaporated, and the pure evangel of the New Testament would have been overlaid with a host of mystic and futile esoteric speculations. It saved the Christianity of Christ and Paul and secured authority for the apostolic records; and it rooted Christianity in fact and not in speculation. At the same time the Church as an *institution*, bound together

[1] Cf. *Hist. Dogma*, English trans., i., p. 312.

by a rule of faith, a common discipline, a recognized clergy or body of teachers and bishops, claimed the loyalty not only of the uneducated masses, but of the cultured Greeks. Thus two elements came into play. On the one hand, the tolerance of Christianity towards its intellectual environment attracted the culture of the Graeco-Roman world. The presentation of the faith in the writings of Justin and other apologists, and especially of Clement and Origen, is related to the idealism of Greek philosophy. On the other hand, the process of accommodation to the ideas and practices of its environment brought with it what Harnack calls a secularization, which in the fourth century came to a climax in the Catholicized cultus and organization of the Church. Thus we have two sharply contrasted phases of development: the Latin or institutional type of mind, represented by Tertullian and Cyprian—a law of faith, an episcopal government, a development of ceremonial, a canon of Scripture—all external factors making for the unity and discipline of the whole body, sharply divided as it was into clergy and laity; and over against this, in the realm of thought, the Greek minds of Clement and Origen, shaping the Christian truth into a scientific, coherent system, which would appeal to the cultivated world, or, as Harnack phrases it, 'the legitimizing of Greek philosophy within the sphere of the rule of faith.' These thinkers bridged the chasm between early Christianity and the thought of the ancient world, just as Philo before them had linked up Judaism with the wisdom of the Greeks. Hence they became the

real creators of Christian theology. Alexandria was the centre in which a Christian *gnosis*, or scientific groundwork of faith, was wrought out, to become a permanent and valuable factor in Christian thought; while at the same time Rome was laying the foundations of the Catholic *ecclesia*, or the external organization which was to endure as the earthly model of the *Civitas Dei*, the spiritual home and refuge of the faithful in all generations. Thus the needs of Christian experience were met and interpreted, on the one hand by a rule of faith founded on the authoritative canon of the New Testament, on the other by the Logos doctrine, which, on the basis of the Johannine writings, was wrought into a symmetrical system by the insight of Clement and Origen. If Rome, thus speaking generally, was the creator of Western Christianity, Alexandria was the birthplace of the Graeco-Christian theology which was to flourish in the sympathetic atmosphere of the Christianity of the East, until at length, with the two Gregories and Basil, it surrendered its supremacy in the fourth century to Antioch.

It is highly probable that while Christianity made considerable numerical progress in the second and third centuries, the great mass of its adherents were unaware of the doctrinal conflict that was being waged on behalf of the faith. The rationalism of a Cerinthus and of a Celsus were temporary ripples on the stream of the average Christian experience. The Gnostic heresies which Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement, and Origen combated so successfully were too recondite

to disturb the simple faith of the multitude It always has been so; the conflicts of theologians leave the mass of believers unaffected. Nevertheless, the truth at all costs had to be established; and the doctrine of the Logos which provoked the contest became, in the hands of Clement and Origen, the foundation-truth of Christian theology. In the writings of the apologists the main theme was the purity of Christian monotheism, in contrast with the moral failure of polytheism and the superiority of a divine revelation which, from of old, was attested by prophets and even the philosophers of antiquity, and was now set forth by Christ, the one Redeemer that could deliver man from the tyranny of demons by enabling him to live a holy life. God was Father, the infinitely righteous Creator and Lord of Life and Being, who through His Son, Jesus Christ, once the historic man, now exalted to be Saviour and Lord of humanity, had reconciled the world to Himself.

But while echoing the language of the New Testament, the apostolic Fathers and the apologists had never faced the question, What was the real relationship of Christ to the Father? The Church had as yet attempted no discussion of this problem on scientific lines. To some thinkers, such as the Ritschlians, it has appeared to be unfortunate that Christian theology at this juncture should proceed to deal with the metaphysic of the person of Christ. But that it could do otherwise remains to be proved. In the first instance, as Sanday has pointed out, the question was not metaphysical, but entirely practical. Did the

Christian believe in two, or even three, Gods? If not, how could Christ, a man, become the object of adoration and faith? Hitherto the thought of the Church had been largely Monarchian; that is to say, it was more concerned to uphold the unity of God than explain the distinctions of the Trinity. Second-century thinkers like Noetus and Sabellius, in opposing Gnosticism, upheld the conception of Modalism, which Hippolytus sought to refute. They sought to solve the problem by asserting the unity of God and explaining that His relation to the universe was threefold, as Creator, as Redeemer, and the Life of the believer. Another famous Monarchian was Paul of Samosata in Syria, who towards the close of the third century denied that Christ was God, except in the sense that His humanity developed into deity—a form of thought to which the term Adoptianism has been given. The Arianism of the fourth century, which the Nicene Creed was framed to condemn, by asserting that the Son had entered the human body of Jesus, was but another attempt to solve the difficulty. The Alexandrian theology, on the other hand, proclaimed that *the truth of the Logos implied the eternal pre-existence of the Son*. The terms 'Son' and 'Father' do not indicate separate individuality, but a real unity. The Logos is the eternal self-expression of the supreme Spirit of God; the Son is one substance with the Father, distinct, yet participating in the divine nature.

The time had not yet arrived for similarly expounding in careful theological language the truth of the

Holy Spirit. The New Testament afforded no definite teaching on the nature of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul's language appears to identify the Second and Third Persons, or at least to draw no distinction between the Spirit and the glorified Christ. Personal attributes are applied to the Spirit, but we have no trace of the conception of the Spirit as 'Person' in the sense in which the Athanasian Creed employs the term. We have seen how, in the creeds of Irenaeus and Tertullian, the Holy Spirit is not mentioned. Tertullian arguing against Praxeas[1] (xii.) used language about the Holy Spirit which is ambiguous, now differentiating the Spirit from the Logos and now identifying the Spirit with the Logos. No one doubted His reality; for all enjoyed His power, and the witness of the Spirit in life has always been, and always will be, more effective than the dogmatic presentation of His person in a formula. But the way was being steadily prepared by the truth of the divine immanence for the theological assertion of the equal divinity with Father and Son of 'the Lord and Giver of Life.' It was by slow stages that the Trinitarian doctrine was built up by the theologians of the Church. That the Nicene or any formula of that age can for all time be a valid presentation of the profound doctrine of the threefold distinctions within the Godhead no one will assert. Moreover, the resources of human language may never be adequate to the task of framing a statement which will do justice to the rich and sublime conception

[1] Praxeas was an extreme Monarchian who, in the vigorous language of Tertullian (cf. *Adv. Prax.*, i.), 'put to flight the Paraclete and crucified the Father.'

of the Divine Being enshrined in the doctrine of the Trinity in such a way as to safeguard ordinary intelligence from the error of Tritheism.

This summary, brief though it is, of the development of Christian thought in the first three centuries of Church history reminds us that doctrine is first the product of Christian experience, and secondly that Christian experience owes its verification to the written revelation contained in the New Testament. In the New Testament we have the source of all that which shapes human life to the highest issues and informs the intellect with its sublimest inspirations. The yearning for spiritual truth, for certitude, for clear definition of the verities of the Christian faith, is a noble aspiration, but it owes its vitality to the canonical records of the Christian faith. The New Testament keeps the soul alive. Its message is the very breath of God moving on the face of the waters, the heavenly wind that blows from the pure hills of His Being. In the apostolic age the Old Testament was the Bible of the Church, but perhaps even in St. Paul's lifetime his letters were read in divine service, and later on other epistles and writings, like those of the martyr Ignatius and the *Shepherd* of the Christian prophet Hermas, were likewise read. Then the four Gospels were collected into a unity ; but the final steps towards the formation of a complete New Testament, parallel with the Old Testament, were probably quickened by the teachings of Marcion,[1] who, rejecting the Old Testament altogether, made a new Bible for his followers

[1] Cf. Tertull., *Adv. Marc.*, iv. and v., especially iv. 2 and v. 21.

out of 'the Gospel,' which was a mutilated Gospel according to St. Luke, and the ten Epistles of St. Paul, rejecting the Pastoral Epistles and the rest of the New Testament. The Church then formed the New Testament, after separating canonical writings from uncanonical, the generally accepted compositions from those lacking such attestation. The first list of the canonical books is given by the famous Muratorian fragment (*cir.* 170),[1] but we may say that our New Testament was in use towards the middle of the second century—perhaps earlier—and was quoted by Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement. The possession of a New Testament in the form of a roll of papyrus, which was the material chiefly used in the first three centuries, was due to the good fortune of the owner in having found a skilled copyist who could do the work, unless indeed he could do it by himself. For the multiplication of copies in the form of books a body of slaves was employed, like those of Pamphilus, the friend of Origen,[2] and later the more durable if more expensive form of vellum became the rule, after having been the exclusive privilege of the wealthy. After two centuries the use of the 'common' Greek (*koinē*) declined and Latin took its place in Rome and the West, in Gaul and Spain and notably in Africa, where a Latin version appeared towards the end of the second century; while in the East the increasing vogue of Syriac and the native language of Egypt (Coptic) created a

[1] So called because its discoverer was the Italian historian and librarian Muratori, who published it in 1740.

[2] Cf. v. Dobschütz, art. 'The Bible in the Church' in *E. R. E.*

demand for versions of the New Testament in those tongues. Such versions were produced about the same time as the Latin. These facts confirm the impression that the reading of the Bible from very early times was a widespread custom in Christian homes. The Old Testament Psalter was both the hymn-book and prayer-book of the early centuries. Tatian[1] says, 'Christian maidens sit at the distaff and sing about the divine revelation'; and Tertullian[2] speaks of husband and wife echoing together psalms and hymns and challenging each other which shall better chant to the Lord. The order of Diocletian to destroy all the sacred writings added a new horror to the martydoms of the Christians, for deacons, readers, and others were seized and tortured until they surrendered these treasured possessions. We have on record the noble answer of Euplius of Catana, who was asked by the judge why he had not obeyed the Emperor's order and surrendered his Bible: 'Because I am a Christian, and it was against my conscience to give it up and it is better to die than to give it up.'[3]

There is preserved also in the *Proceedings before Zenophilus*, among the matter-of-fact depositions of witnesses, a singularly vivid account of a search for scriptures at Cirta, the modern Constantine in Algiers. Certain treacherous secretaries of the bishop conduct the magistrates and a police officer to the houses of a schoolmaster, a mosaic-worker, and a civil servant, in

[1] Cf. *Orat.* 33.

[2] Cf. *Ad Ux.*, ii. 8. The whole passage is worth reading as a picture of the ideal Christian wedlock. But there are no children in the picture.

[3] Quoted in the original by v. Dobschütz, *loc. cit.*, p. 606.

each of which they find the precious manuscripts (*codices*), large and small.[1]

Thus, in the earlier centuries of Christianity the Bible is already at the centre of the Church's life, the source of divine wisdom and moral strength for the learned and unlearned, the theologian and the tradesman, the scholar and the ploughboy, the wealthy and the poor, the orthodox and the heretic alike. No greater service could have been done to the cause of the faith than the attempt of Marcion to limit the range of Christian inspiration, for his views not only directed attention to the necessity of placing side by side with the Old Testament an authoritative collection of the written records of the Christian faith, but brought into operation that spirit of inquiry and critical judgement which, under the guidance of the Spirit, exercised an admirable discrimination between scriptures of permanent value and those that represented a transient need or phase of thought, e.g. the *Shepherd* of Hermas, which, as the Muratorian Canon states, cannot be read in the Church for all time. Surely the minds of those who shaped the canon of New Testament scripture were divinely illuminated and controlled in the selection of Christian literature—a selection which no future knowledge or research was to modify or dispute.

In his description of the life of the 'gnostic'—that is, the truly enlightened Christian—in the seventh book of the *Stromateis*,[2] Clement of Alexandria urges that

[1] Cf. for text Gebhardt, *op. cit.*, and Workman, *op. cit.*, p. 272, for other interesting examples.

[2] Cf. § 49.

as the physician provides health for those who co-operate with him for health, so God provides eternal salvation for those who co-operate with Him for knowledge and right action; and he claims that this attitude to God makes of life 'a holy festival,' where prayer, praise, and the reading of scripture enable a man to unite himself with the choir celestial, in preparation for an 'ever-mindful contemplation' in eternity. But he also has a clear conception that the life of contemplation is to be one with the life of activity. The gnostic is a worker 'in the Lord's vineyard'[1]; and 'once he has formed the habit of doing good, he loses no time in benefiting others also, praying that he may be reckoned as sharing in the sins of his brethren with a view to the repentance and conversion of his kinsfolk. . . . Throughout the day and night he is filled with joy, uttering and doing the precepts of the Lord.' Here is a picture which lingers in the mind, not without reproach to the modern Christian, who may well feel that it depicts a standard not yet attained by, and by no means familiar to, a generation which has still to learn the lesson of individual responsibility for the sins of the community.

[1] Cf. § 74 and § 80.

EPILOGUE: MESSAGE OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES TO THE MODERN CHURCH

THERE is scarcely an epoch in the history of civilization of which the contemplation does not call forth the opposing sentiments of exhilaration and depression. On the one hand, we note the triumph of the human spirit in accomplishing great issues, political, moral, spiritual, against inconceivable obstacles; on the other, the inevitable reaction which seems to rob the triumph of its fruits and modify its beneficent influence upon the life of mankind. The effect of environment, the interplay of human prejudice, the conflict of ideal, the concession to traditional sentiment which converts an accepted truth into a compromise, the fatal complacency which forgets that a *fait accompli* is but a condition of further advance—these are some of the aspects of reaction. Decadence and renaissance, renaissance and decadence, the cycle of energy following and then in time yielding to the cycle of inertia, who has not found these to be the recurring sequences of all human endeavour in the ages of the past? And who in the light of experience has not been afraid, whenever enthusiasm has prevailed so far as to secure the public conversion to a great cause, lest the favouring wind will fall and the barque be becalmed in mid-ocean far from its port?

The triumph of Christianity over paganism certainly changed the world's history. The wonder of it grows as we trace the historical process which led up to the peace of the Church. It is not necessary to re-examine the causes of the victory.[1] But it is clear that it did not destroy the spirit of paganism, which is the eternal enemy of Christianity, even though it undermined the crumbling fabric of the classic religions, with their human deities, their ineffectual sacrifices, their immoralities and futile beliefs. The effort made by Julian to revive the fading splendours of Hellenism in the generation after the Council of Nicaea resulted in failure ; nevertheless, the old religion died hard. What concerns us in the retrospect is that State recognition had the immediate effect of crystallizing the Catholic tendencies of the previous generations into the rigid disciplinary unity of the Catholic Church. The hierarchy set itself to compress the current conceptions of the person of Christ and the Trinity into the scientific statements of the creeds which the Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon were to reduce to the finality of orthodox dogma. Thus the freedom of the spirit for which St. Paul pleaded was transformed into the activity of rigorous ecclesiasticism, which in the heated atmosphere of controversy produced authoritative decrees for the guidance of the faithful and the discomfiture of heretics. Other aspects of fourth-century Christianity are significant of the change that had taken place—the development of the Church into a

[1] The reader may be referred to a succinct estimate of these causes in chap. ix., *I. E. C. H.*

wealthy corporation with the baneful symptoms of corruption and worldliness, the disturbing effects of dogmatic controversy on the spiritual zeal of the Church, the internal divisions, the bitter personal rivalries and struggles for lucrative office, and above all the steady growth of Catholic ritual in the worship of saints and images, and the accretions of superstition and magical ideas upon the early simplicities of Christian devotion. Furthermore, the varying attitude of the successors of Constantine, sympathetic with Christianity like Constantius and Constans, or frankly pagan like Julian and Theodosius, the separation of the functions of the empire between the two emperors of East and West, the ever-deepening shadow of Gothic invasion, the capture of Greece by Alaric's army, and, after the check at Pollentia, the renewal of the attack on Italy—all were elements of unrest in the Church as well as the empire, and each prophetic of an imminent crisis. The blow fell when in the summer of 410 Alaric entered Rome and let his troops loose on the Eternal City, to indulge their passions of plunder and of outrage, though he spared those Christians who found sanctuary in the basilicas of SS. Peter and Paul and endeavoured to save the objects of Christian veneration. This stupendous event marked a stage in the growing disintegration of the Western Empire. Augustine, in his massive treatise the *De Civitate Dei*, sought to refute the pagan contention that the fall of Rome was due to Christianity and its contempt of the old gods. But he was unable to disguise the fact that the triumph of Christianity was far from complete. Rome, in effect, after nearly

four centuries of Christian influence was largely a pagan city ; and Augustine's closing vision is that of a spiritual city, eternal in the heavens, where sin shall cease to be. The Last Judgement and the everlasting bliss constitute the climax of his apocalypse. The one henceforth was to be a ground of warning and exhortation, and the other a fountain of comfort and hope to a world disintegrated and disillusioned, being eternal elements in the divine government of the world not only for an Augustine meditating on the sack of Rome, or a Bernard of Clugny keeping vigil in the *hora novissima tempora pessima* of mediaeval corruption, but also for the mass of humble and obscure Christians in all ages of the Church. One of the most familiar of all generalizations is that Christianity was saved in the break-up of the Western Empire by the Catholic Church. With an organization modelled on the empire, its internal unity was maintained by the authority of the hierarchy, and when the secular government crumbled the spiritual fabric remained intact. It is only a half-truth. It was not the institutionalism of Christianity or the peculiar mould into which its external forms had been wrought, but the truth which these enshrined, that survived the changes of the world. If there had been no Latin Catholicism the gospel would not have perished. It had became rooted in the soul. The Empire might vanish ; the word of God remained.

But let us retrace our steps to the close of the first century. The New Testament itself has prepared us for the long-enduring struggle with the secular powers. The era of happy, undisturbed expansion, breathed

in the buoyant narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, was suddenly to merge into that of conflict and death. The opposition of the Judaists in the Pauline communities had been less significant and alarming than the suspicion and hostility of the imperial authorities. The Christians were now recognized as a distinctive people, and no longer a sect of the Jews. Hitherto, as the Acts of the Apostles shows, the Roman Government had shown a certain leniency towards the Christians when they were attacked by the Jews. But the very hostility of the Jews revealed the fact that Christianity was rather a new religion than a rival Jewish sect. The rabble of cities like Thessalonica and Ephesus had shown ugly signs, not merely of suspicion, but of ill-will. This antipathy, which was fomented by the Jews, was to grow. In the Neronian terror it was easy to use the prejudices of the multitude as an argument for affixing a charge of incendiarism upon a strange sect supposed to be guilty of unspeakable crimes and a hatred of the human race.

How did the earlier non-canonical Christian writers deal with the crisis? We turn from Tacitus to the epistle of Clement of Rome to the Church of Corinth—one of the earliest extant writings of the apostolic Fathers There is a poignant interest in some of its phrases, e.g. in its reference to the women victims, who were attired to represent the legendary daughters of Danaus (*Danaides*) as they were attacked by beasts, or to represent a group of Dirces (*Dirkai*), Dirce having been fastened to the tail (or horns) of a wild bull.[1]

[1] That is, if we follow the reading Δαναΐδες καὶ Δίρκαι in 1 Clem. *ad Cor.* vi.

But Clement's epistle does not move us like an epistle of St. Paul. And this impression of a lost inspiration clings to us as we study the patristic literature of the early Christian centuries. There is a dullness that palls on us in the writings of a Hermas or in those treatises of the high-minded Cyprian which set forth rigid views on ecclesiastical regulations. Even Tertullian, who rarely fails to move us with his brilliant flashes of fancy, humour, irony, and invective, leaves us cold when he discourses on the veiling of virgins or fasting. Yet if we can tolerate the recondite allusions of a treatise like the *De pallio*, wherein he indulges his fancy on the philosophy of clothes in reference to the mantle of the ascetic, which has taken the place of his toga, we shall sooner or later reach the real man behind the narrow disciplinarian, as when he closes with the apostrophe, 'Rejoice, O Mantle, and exult; a better philosophy has now deigned to honour thee ever since thou hast begun to be the garb of a Christian.' The Greek *Epistle to Diognetus*, and the Latin *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, are little classics of the literature of apology. Clement of Alexandria stands apart as the first of Christian humanists; his manner may be discursive and his style involved, but his pages abound in passages of sheer beauty, charming by the brightness of their fancy and revealing the width of his sympathies and his culture by their apt quotations and happy illustrations, which enrich his argument. It is, in fact, easy to disparage the writings of the Fathers by unfair and ill-judged comparisons with those of the early apostles, and to forget that works which to the average

Christian have become a proverb of dullness were produced by men of striking personality. Among them we can count converts from paganism, saints of whom the world was not worthy, and notable martyrs like Justin, Cyprian, and Origen. It is true that the early creative inspiration of the Church gave way under the impact of environment to the pragmatic but necessary labours of self-defence, the exposition of the truth and the establishment of Church discipline. The care of the Churches, their inner life and organization, was accompanied by unceasing efforts to combat the intellectual and moral 'oppositions of gnosis, falsely so-called,'[1] the practices of rival religious cults, and the prejudices of the imperial authorities. It is for these reasons that a study of Christian life subsequent to the first century is of special value, although our sources of information are scanty and miscellaneous. We need to modify the impression given by the New Testament of a rapid and joyous advance, breathed, e.g., in such ecstatic words[2] as St. Paul's when he exclaims that God makes his life 'a constant pageant of triumph in Christ, diffusing the perfume of His knowledge everywhere' by him. After the first century the progress was not uniform; it suffered, indeed, grievous checks in the epochs of persecution. Nevertheless, the missionary movement, once begun, never came to a stop. Before the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 Christians are found in Gaul, in Spain, in Germany, in Egypt, and North Africa. Christianity has established itself in the chief cities

[1] Cf. 1 Tim. vi. 20. [2] Cf. 2 Cor. ii. 14 (Moffatt).

of the Mediterranean littoral, and in the islands of Sicily and Crete, in Greece, Thrace, and Macedonia, and, above all, in the regions of Asia Minor and Syria, with Antioch as its chief centre. It has penetrated even beyond the limits of the empire into Mesopotamia, as far as Edessa, which became 'the metropolis of the Syriac-speaking Church'[1] and a centre of Christian life, isolated and independent 'on the confines of two great civilizations, the Greek and the Persian.' A century later it is clear that expansion on a much greater scale has taken place. It is necessary to remember this missionary movement, which steadily keeps pace with internal organization and is not cut off by State hostility. All the time the Church is developing her organic life, and shaping out a system of groups of churches under the oversight of a bishop. All the time, also, Christianity is at work in a world which was under the domination of pagan morals and manners, superstitions, demon worships, and degrading idolatry; yet withal sensitive to religious appeal, and curiously interested in the unseen powers. The task of the Church was aided by the travelling facilities, the postal system and great roads of the empire.[2] Even if imperial decrees against a faith opposed to the worship of the empire were ruthlessly administered by local magistrates, acting under the direction of pro-consul and legatus, the law and government of Rome had reduced human life, even in its most remote

[1] Cf. Burkitt's very interesting lectures on *Early Christianity outside the Roman Empire*, and Harnack's *M. E. C.*, vol. ii., pp. 94 f.

[2] The reader may be referred to the excellent essay, *Travel in the First Century*, by C. A. J. Skeel; also pp. 26–8 of *I. E. C. H.*

provinces, to civilized order, punishing crime, brigandage, and offences against society with a rigorous hand. Yet, in view of the religious, intellectual, and social influences, which we have sketched in Part II., it is a signal proof of a real response to the general hunger for spiritual light that the faith so successfully survived in those very areas where the attack was bitter and continuous, such as, e.g., the provinces of Africa, Numidia, and Asia. It did more, however, than fulfil the needs of the soul. It subjected human nature to a supreme test by its demands for a life of self-renunciation. But it made it evident to hosts of believers that though its claims were so rigorous, ethically and socially, the struggle was worth while, and the harvest of martyrdoms was golden with divine possibilities for the whole future of the race. It taught the individual to think not entirely of his own future bliss; for in pledging him to the service of Christ it pledged him to the service of humanity.

If, therefore, we may summarize the message—a message of both hope and instruction—afforded by pre-Nicene Christianity to the Christians of the modern world, it is to emphasize three related factors—its simplicity, its self-renunciation, and its spirit of service.

In the first place, under the head of doctrine we have to face the question whether the modern Church has not tended to confuse the issue, by presenting Christianity as a system of truth which has become elaborated by process of time into dogmatic statements which no longer appeal to either the intellect or the soul of average humanity. Theology is not to be confounded

with religion. The former is rightly described, by virtue of its subject matter, as the 'queen of sciences.' For teachers of the Christian faith who are to be guides in things spiritual to others the study is essential, just as a grasp of the principles of biology is essential for the scientific exponent of organic nature. Every Christian teacher ought to be a theologian in the sense that he has a competent acquaintance with the history of dogma and the development of religious thought, and comprehends the essential verities of the faith, especially in their relation to philosophy and history. His object is to discover what men have thought about the mysteries of revelation and of the spiritual world in the past, to accept all new light which has been brought to the reason by advancing knowledge and enlarged experience, and further to aid the sceptical mind to a solution of its difficulties. But when this has been granted, the primary appeal of Christian truth is to an instinct or capacity for God which is ineradicable. Reason, will, and feeling are all brought into play when the Christian teacher asks for a verdict upon the question, How is the eternal need of the soul to be satisfied? The idea of God had become concrete in the personality of Christ, therefore the early Christian began by saying to himself, 'Jesus is Lord.' Speratus, one of the Scillitan martyrs, made a noble reply to the proconsul's pleading that the religion of emperor-worship was a *simplex religio*. He said, 'If you will lend me your ears in peace, I can tell you of a mystery of simplicity' (*dico mysterium simplicitatis*). To believe in Jesus meant for him a turning to the source

of new moral power and an active appropriation of the power by a deliberate choice. The issue was the living of good life. He had come to God by way of the heavenly man or Redeemer Christ. Henceforth his life in the flesh was a life of faith upon the Son of God, who had loved him and given Himself for him, and such faith involved an act of self-dedication to Christ as Saviour and Lawgiver. Of course, this simple gospel had infinite implications, and raised subtle questions for the thoughtful mind which realized the complexity of life and the unseen world. But it was not the metaphysic but the ethic of Christianity which mattered most to the early believer. His conception of Christ involved 'a judgement-value,' which implied a new standard of conduct. His conduct henceforth implied belief in Christ, but he did not owe his belief to his acceptance of a formula about Christ, but to Christ Himself. He had been 'captured'[1] by Christ, and henceforth was Christ's servant. It was when the Church began to raise orthodoxy, or correct belief, to the rank of an absolute condition of salvation that it took a wrong turn. It was not the formulation of the creed that was a mistake; rather it was the exaggerated value which it attached to the creed. For the authority of the Church tended to supersede the authority of 'the mind of Christ.' 'The mind of Christ' was a fact susceptible of many interpretations, some, it is true, involving crude views of personality and of psychology as regards, e.g., the relation of body and spirit; hence the vogue of gnostic and ascetic

[1] Cf. Phil. iii. 12.

sects. The leaders of the Church abjured sects which proclaimed immoral tenets; but in early usage 'heresy' and 'schism' meant much the same thing and did not imply separation from the Church, though later on 'heresy' came to imply the rejection of a truth in the apostolic creed, and 'schism' a secession from the main body of the Church, not involving any dissent from the fundamental doctrines of the faith.[1] Harnack has pointed out that Cyprian hardly distinguishes between heresy and schism.[2] An earnest and narrow mind like Novatian's might take the puritan view that the sin of the lapsed was unpardonable; but Cyprian's opposition to this view, based as it was on his idea of the unity of the Church, was to result in Novatian's exclusion from the Catholic Church by a solemn sentence of excommunication on the part of sixty bishops at Rome. The idea of a hierarchy enforcing a rule of faith and making obedience to ecclesiastical authority a condition of salvation was a slow growth. Contradictory conceptions of the Church, as Harnack shows, appear in the statements of Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian, and Origen; but Cyprian's view of the unity of the Church as resting entirely on the episcopate, because the latter was a perpetuation of the apostolic office, finally prevailed, and remains with us to-day. What we are concerned to note in this review is that Christianity was advancing steadily, while the conception of authority as vested in the episcopate and finally in the Roman see, was still in the making. The

[1] Cf. art. 'Schism,' H. W. Fulford, *E. R. E.*
[2] Cf. *Hist. Dogma*, English trans., ii., pp. 92–3.

spiritual progress of the Church in all ages ultimately rests, not upon a theory of authority, but upon the *dunamis* of Christ as experienced both by the individual and the society to which he belongs.

There have always been simple and untutored souls who want their religious thinking done for them ; but the cause of true religion will be checked if man abdicates his right to think for himself in the matter of religion, or if he blindly accepts the profession of religion on the authority of others, however saintly. The soul of a youth who necessarily owes his first religious impressions to authority has not to be hardened into a groove by over-rigid religious training, but has to receive such wise and tactful guidance as will enable him to choose for himself. One of the encouraging features of young life to-day is the love of reality and freedom ; both have their perils, but both have a positive value. Any ecclesiastical system of thought and ritual which represses instead of guiding individuality is contrary to the spirit of the gospel. And our guidance, in view of the needs of the new generation, is not to be modelled on the methods of the Jesuit, but on the spirit of the pre-Nicene age, in which a reasonable latitude of belief within the limits of a reverent devotion to the person and fact of Christ was permitted.

Christianity advanced in an atmosphere of freedom and joy both in times of storm and tranquillity. It achieved the ideal of unity in diversity of opinion and interpretation in matters of belief and conduct. Differences arose—often rancorous and divisive—

after the manner of the New Testament Church of Corinth, but the mind[1] (or moral judgement) of Christ prevailed to save the general life of the Church. All the time this steady advance was going on the theology of the Church was inchoate. The doctrine of the Logos was destined more and more to evolve on a metaphysical plane, and to lead away the Greek thinkers from the historic Jesus to an *a priori* conception of the divine life, and of the relations of the two natures in the Incarnate Lord. We have to accept the facts of history, though we may regret the tendencies which moulded the thinking of the Church in its treatment of the problems of the person of Christ and of the Trinity, and though we may dislike the tendencies toward asceticism and toward an elaborate ritual, and other effects of the accommodation to pagan cults out of which Latin Catholicism was evolved. There are those who regard the whole process as providential. Perhaps it would be simpler to say that it was inevitable in view of the society to which Christianity appealed. Professor F. C. Burkitt regards the destruction of Jerusalem and consequent extinction of Palestinian Christianity as a grievous loss to our knowledge of the life of Jesus; but even if Palestinian Christianity had preserved intact traditions now lost of Christ's life, it is doubtful if the course either of Christianity or of its doctrine would have been markedly affected. It is true that the appearance of the Gospels indicated the growing desire of the

[1] The term used by the apostle in 1 Cor. ii. 16 is νοῦς, not πνεῦμα, but νοῦς in this connexion is not intellect pure and simple but intellect enlightened by the indwelling spirit of God.

Church to realize the life, teaching, and work of the man Jesus. The Fourth Gospel completes the witness of St. Paul in that it is a blend of the Christ of the creeds with the Jesus of the gospel, and therefore of eternal value. For the Jesus of history requires an explanation as a presentation of man at his best,[1] the Perfect Man, a fact so transcendent that of itself it lifts humanity into a transcendental sphere; the human becomes divine as we ponder over it. To-day these doctrinal questions are not solved. Our modern approach to the doctrine of Christ's Person is deductive, not inductive as in the Nicene age. The theology of the Trinity, if it is to survive at all, will have to be stated afresh, in terminology no longer antiquated and obscure. We need a simplification of the complexities which have rendered the old formulae untenable or difficult. The work requires immense patience, unhurried and reverent inquiry, and the guidance of the Spirit. But this means a return to the temper of early Christianity. We must begin not by abandoning the creeds but by revising them in the light of our newer knowledge and our newer methods. We are to-day in a better position to find a solution and to simplify the doctrinal appeal of Christianity. The briefer the creed, the better; the more fully it is liberated from metaphysical and philosophical technicalities, the more effectually will it meet the needs of this generation. The matter is urgent, for the best minds of the nation are needed in the Church, and above all in its ministry. The difficulties that keep first-class

[1] Cf. Jones, *A Faith that Enquires*, p. 293.

minds from entering the ministry are moral, intellectual, and economic. Mental reservation and the violation of conscience in subscription to obsolete articles or formulae is absolutely hurtful and foreign to the spirit of the gospel. The position of a Christian minister is increasing in responsibility as preacher, teacher, organizer, educator, and citizen; and the future of Christianity depends on our securing for the pastoral office men whose intellectual equipment is as strong as their personal piety and spiritual devotion. Most Churches will take steps to solve their economic problem, but do the laity realize the importance of the intellectual problem for educated England?

Another aspect of simplicity is that of worship and ritual. Here again we note, as in the development of authority, the gradual change of ideal. It was of course inevitable that the pure simplicities of Galilean Christianity could not be retained in a Church which developed amid the complex influences of the Graeco-Roman world. Forms of worship and ritual steadily accommodated themselves to their historic environment and to the needs of the varied types of humanity brought under the influence of the gospel. Baptism, and more particularly the eucharist, gradually lost their primitive and natural meaning as signs of spiritual reality, and were transformed into modes of salvation and rites essential to regeneration and imposed by external authority. The tendency to lay stress on externals, and to regard them as of equal spiritual value with personal religion,

has pursued Christianity in its historic course as it pursued Judaism, and with similar baneful consequences. It came to be regarded as essential that the divine grace should be mediated through an authorized priesthood and ritual before it could be accepted as a valid possession of the conscience or spirit of man. Salvation was consequently sooner or later to be limited and mechanized by Church regulation. *Nulla salus extra ecclesiam* is a maxim which may be repudiated to-day by tolerant orthodox Christians, but *officially*, alike for the Roman and the Anglo-Catholic, it remains a fixed dogma. How it can be harmonized with 'the mind of Christ' passes our comprehension. The argument that if it is abandoned the Church will inevitably be split into a group of unrelated Protestant sects leaves us cold when the facts of history are clearly mastered. It is to the Catholic view of authority more than to any other cause that we can trace the present dissidence of Christendom. The Roman Church has purchased her unity by an absolutism which has destroyed individual freedom, and maintains her autocracy by virtue of her unbending discipline and her rigid claim to be the arbitress of the spiritual destiny of mankind. An eloquent writer has recently expounded the superb comprehensiveness of the Roman Church, her passion for beauty, and her many-sided aesthetic appeal, in the following sentence: 'While her tradition mingles the subtle sweetness of dying Asiatic gods, the Hellenic mysteries, the Galilean tenderness, the Pauline asceticism, the Alexandrian vision, the Roman pomp, the Gothic ecstasy, the Franciscan

simplicity, the superb Renaissance effrontery, the humanities and passions of innumerable saints, in her gorgeous symbolism of the miracle of the spiritual life, she continues to fascinate the sophisticated and the simple in the lovely democracy of her rites.'[1] While in sympathy with every type of passionate idealism which is evoked by loyalty to the Church, one cannot refrain from remarking that the word 'democracy' will not bear examination. Can, e.g., such a ceremony as High Mass be regarded as a democratic rite by any but unthinking minds? Get behind its scenic impressiveness and solemnity and you find it implies a spiritual autocracy far removed from the teaching of our Lord, in that it imposes upon the worshipper as a necessary condition of any spiritual benefit a belief in a hierarchy invested with the miraculous power of objectifying the presence of the Lord. No aesthetic considerations ought to blind us to this aspect of the truth. Revolt from the Latin theory of the sublimely simple act of the holy fellowship as instituted by our Lord prejudices hundreds of Christian people towards its essentially spiritual claim to their observance. It further renders them apathetic to all sacramental acts. And so long as any Church bases its right to mediate the grace of God to the world upon tradition, historic ceremonialism, and a mechanically transmitted grace, does it truly represent the spirit of the Christ of Galilee? Nevertheless, the fact remains that Latin Catholicism is still the spiritual refuge of three hundred millions of our race,

[1] *Aspects of the Renaissance*, by R. A. Taylor, p. 250.

and embodies an order of Christian thought and practice which apparently fulfils a need of human nature. Amid the varied types of worship—elaborate, rich, and simple—ranging from Catholic pomp to the informal assembly of the Society of Friends, we have reason to rejoice that 'in every way Christ is magnified' although we may differ *toto orbe* on the question of relative values in the Christian witness. The place of beauty, art, and above all reverence, has never been more cordially recognized by all types of Christianity than it is to-day. The genius of Christianity demands a worship that ought not to be ugly and slovenly, but rather austerely refined and beautiful, if it has fitly to express the simple mystery of the soul's immediate access to Christ. We have seen by what complex forces of environment Catholicism was shaped into a system of ceremonialism and legalism remote from the spirit of the New Testament. In effect, it produced a paganized Christianity. But the aesthetic charm of Catholic worship, the glory of ancient buildings, the solemnities of mediaeval chants and liturgies, the pageantry of colour in vestment and ritual, have only a subordinate place in the evolution of the Christian ideal. The vital question is, Can that ideal be said to dominate the conscience of modern Europe? Both the Western and Eastern Churches show ominous signs of failure to adapt Christianity to the needs of a changed world. The new Russia, e.g., cries out for the evangel of Jesus, and demands another Tolstoi, not indeed a writer fleeing the world in a spirit of quietism, but an evangelist and prophet

who will lead the people back to the simplicity of the gospel.

Thirdly, there is a simplicity in the ordering of life which we may learn from early Christians. The popular ideal of Christianity to-day is healthy in its demand for the activity of love. All classes of the community, indifferent to dogmatic distinctions and content with forms of worship which, even if homely and simple, they nevertheless desire to be reverent, are laying the final emphasis on *character*. If Christianity produces a 'good-living' man, the man is an argument for Christianity. Hence to-day there is a widespread interest in the exemplification of the teaching of Christ in the actual practice of the individual and its application to the social order.

Christianity bases its ethic on its doctrine of God; it unifies religion and morality; hence it stands apart from all other religions. The religion of Jesus won its way as a new ethic transforming conduct, and thereupon effected a silent revolution. It leavened social life by a new standard of conduct, and by works of charity, care for the poor, and its emphasis on personal purity of life, stood for a new social order. But the social ethic of Jesus has never yet been recognized to have equal binding force with the private morality inculcated by Him. As we know, even His standard of individual morality has not been attained; for example, the Christian use of wealth has in practice fallen below the New Testament ideal. We acknowledge this defect, but forget the general truth that the spirit of Christ has also to mould the official life of

nation, community, and city. To-day we are coming to see that the Christian Church, largely because of its disunity, has failed to exercise a united moral influence on public policy and social legislation. In the early days it failed, as we have seen, to do this, but it carried within the bosom of the individual ethic the spirit that was to transform the community. It was at least recognized as a 'brotherhood'; whatever the social rank—servants, handmaids, or children—of those who became Christians, 'they call them,' says Aristides[1] in his apology to the Emperor Hadrian, 'without distinction brethren.'

And it is this conception of a universal brotherhood of men and of nations that fascinates to-day. One of the striking features of modern Christian thought is the revival of Christ's teaching about the kingdom of heaven. Living for the Kingdom or Reign of Love in human life, in which personal interests are merged in the interest of the community, and the good of each is only to be realized in the good of all—this is one of the true notes of modern Christianity. At least it has superseded dogmatic interests at the beginning of a century in which 'the reconstruction of life' is the absorbing passion. The 'Kingdom' is not a Utopia of individual thinkers; it is becoming the formative motive of all Christian activity. The implications of the Kingdom are infinite, including the ideals of international friendship and a League of Nations, the abolition of class hatred, of industrial disputes, and of war. Along with this there is a widespread yearning

[1] Cf. *Apol.*, xv.

to sweeten the life of cities by the removal of slums, by providing a living wage for each worker, by securing a more equal distribution of the means of production, and by opening the ranges of higher education and every avenue of beauty and refinement to all classes. Along with this goes the ideal of a simplified life, forced indeed upon us by the war, but now enthralling hundreds of thoughtful young people in England and Germany. Such simplicity means happiness won out of the simplest materials of life, and based on the belief that we are all trustees for the good of the community. It is significant that there is hardly any book of moment dealing with the problem of modern reconstruction which does not ultimately base its argument on the Sermon on the Mount.

But these three factors—simplicity in doctrine, in the outward forms of religion, and in the ordering of individual and social life—are inevitably dependent on the spirit of self-renunciation : ' He that loseth his life shall save it,' whether, as of old, he laid it down in a Roman amphitheatre for Christ, or to-day, freed from the peril of a violent death, he gives himself to a life of bloodless martyr-sacrifice for a great ideal. The renunciation of the world in the early Church was held to involve personal purity, but the influence of Oriental thought produced, as we have seen, an extreme asceticism which was inevitably to culminate in the monastic ideal of self-perfection.[1] No one can deny the nobler side, the earnestness and sincerity of the early Christian puritanism which was to invest virginity

[1] Cf. Workman's *Evolution of the Monastic Ideal*, pp. 28-9.

with peculiar sanctity and historically to lead up to the worship of the Virgin Mother and later to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The notion that natural and bodily instincts and desires were essentially evil is a characteristic of Eastern religious thought. Some of the language used by St. Paul almost suggests that the ideal of bodily self-mortification is elevated into a binding law. But it is clear that his injunctions were pointed by the terrible prevalence of sexual vice in pagan communities, though his Jewish training influenced his distinction between 'flesh' and 'spirit,' the former essentially the instrument of evil, if not actually evil in itself. The teaching of Christ is opposed to the ascetic ideal. Body, like spirit, can be depraved by an evil will, but is not in itself evil. What we are called upon to 'lose' or repudiate is the selfish self, the will to evil. 'All things are yours,' says the apostle, but he adds, 'Ye are Christ's,' and 'Your body is a shrine (*ναός*) of the Holy Spirit.' As Dr. Schweitzer has recently pointed out, Brahmanism and Buddhism are not religions for ordinary men, but for monks, by virtue of their negation of the world and withdrawal from the sphere of deeds to the pursuit of true knowledge. Modern Hinduism, it is true, seeks to correct the emphasis on monastic seclusion from the world as a condition of self-perfection, by attempting to become a religion of ethical activity; but it fails because an ethical religion cannot co-exist with a pantheism which robs God's nature of ethical content. The Christian ideal has been stated once for all in the great prayer of our Lord, who prays, not that 'Thou

wilt take them [His disciples] out of the world, but that Thou wilt keep them from the evil one.' The Christian is not to be of the world any longer, though he has to live his life in it. This means that he repudiates the spirit of the world—its materialism, its love of external goods, its selfishness, its lovelessness, and its grasping ambitiousness.

For the early Christians the spirit of the world and evil was summed up in the Caesarism which asked for divine honours. How do their martyrdoms affect us of to-day? Surely by reminding us that just as they felt the faith of Christ was a faith worth dying for, we have to feel it is a faith worth living for. They gave their best by dying; we have to give our best by living. Perhaps a harder thing; for there is nothing spectacular in the tests of our courage. There is no exaltation of spirit to be evoked by the supreme sacrifice of death; there is nothing now to move us to the grand, visible act of self-immolation. We are faced rather by 'the long self-sacrifice of life.' We have to resist; but to resist more subtle things than imperial edicts, such as habits of life, tendencies of thought, a certain despairing doubt as to the real meaning and value of life, and the old cry of disillusionment, 'Who will show us any good?' There is something elusive and intangible in the modern environment; yet to-day, as then, the enemy is the spirit of the 'world'; that is, the attempt to regard life as outside divine action and to live independently of God. Perhaps we have lost heart because Christianity has seemed to have effected so little for progress after its 2,000 years. Yet, just as

in the days of Marcus Aurelius and Diocletian, the Christian is called upon to-day to fight in 'the ideal' (or 'super-') 'fight of the faith,'[1] and before the tribunal of society to witness for Christ by a distinctive personality shaped by spiritual motive and self-abandoning in its temper and outlook upon life. Whenever Christianity has expressed itself in a life of love it has never failed. Our self-renunciation consists in refusing at every turn to allow our standard of action to be moulded by its environment when that environment contradicts the mind of Christ. For example, let the follower of Jesus begin by resisting the modern idea that Christian worship is an optional duty. The reaction from authority to mysticism has its perils. To over-emphasize experience may individualize our Christian life. We have to guard against this by standing by the Church and its worship and its sacraments. Neglect of the ordinances of religion, like the secularization of the day of rest, which ignores the claims of the unseen world, is at bottom an anti-social tendency which has to be rigorously checked.

It remains finally to urge that self-renunciation registers its sincerity in service. The Christian life is not merely a life of high purpose and sublime vision, but of ethical activity. Service in some shape or form it must be. It is not to be satisfied with a cloistered or 'smothered' virtue. It has to engage in a buoyant, glad, adventurous quest, like the early Christians, who never dreamt of the failure of the truth in the darkest hour of persecution. Every Christian felt

[1] Cf. 1 Tim. vi. 12 : ὁ καλὸς ἀγὼν τῆς πίστεως.

some personal responsibility for the gospel. He tried hard. Of course he failed; he was inconsistent; for, as Tertullian said, 'The sky itself is not washed to such an excellent serenity but that it is stained by some streak of cloud.'[1] Nevertheless, his failure was 'a triumph's evidence for the fullness of the days.' We must teach our children to think less of 'getting on' in the world and more of living without slackness for the great causes of justice, social well-being, and the hallowing of all gifts and every calling by a positive self-dedication to a life of ethical purpose. This is true of all grades of human capacity, but the Church is languishing because it calls, largely in vain, for the best powers, the highest intellects, the most refined and cultured natures in its service for humanity. I put in a plea for the Church, not as a competitor with other forms of social service, but as the embodiment and source of them all. With all the weaknesses which appear to be inseparable from human institutions, it stands for the principles upon which alone civilization will endure. In its missionary work, at home and abroad, it calls for a new crusading zeal as well as new workers.

Again, Christianity is not to be on the defensive only, a barrier against moral evil; it has to be positively militant, in the sense of attacking the powers of evil with the unquenchable ardour of youth. It is a mistake to think of Christianity as an old religion with its best days over. It looks back to history to learn how to succeed, not to find its true golden age (which

[1] Cf. *De Nat.*, i. 5.

is yet to come), but to retrieve its mistakes. 'God has some better thing in store for us.' Nineteen hundred years is nothing to the eternal mind, to whom 'a thousand years is as one day.' It is well to cultivate, like science, the vision of immeasurable achievement. H. G. Wells says, 'It is possible to believe all the past is but a beginning of a beginning . . . and that all the human mind has ever accomplished is but the dream before the awakening.' Add to this reflection another, namely, that Christianity in the darkest epochs has shown a marvellous capacity of rebirth. Resurrection and renewal are of the essence of the faith. Writing in the *Spectator* in 1904, a thoughtful observer remarked that 'With Christianity decay always ends in a spiritual resurrection. The ossification of the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century seems, for example, about to become complete, when behold! the true light of the gospel is beginning to shine in John Wesley's rooms at Oxford.'

To-day the student of Christian history comparing A.D. 324 with A.D. 1924 need not despair, but rather rejoice that the hope and victorious faith inspired by the Christian gospel is not dimmed. 'Christianity as it appears in history lags far behind its ideal, and must strive to get nearer to it than it has done so far' (Schweitzer). Those who went before us did not obtain the promise; but God would not have them perfected apart from us. *Non sine nobis consummati.* With that ennobling incentive let us give ourselves afresh to the tasks of this generation. We are saved by hope; we are justified by faith. It may well be

that we have reached the margin of a new epoch in the historic process, and stand on the threshold of a vast revival of spiritual vision and ethical achievement, inaugurating a reign of the Spirit of Christ more complete and triumphant than any which marked the great days of early Christian history. Civilization has recently been shaken to its foundations; but if the effects are more widely flung than those of any previous historic cataclysm, the lessons to be learned are likewise more generally acknowledged. There is a clearer apprehension of the solidarity of mankind. All experience and all history show that in the ethics of Christ we have the enduring basis of social and national welfare. The present age is a mighty opportunity for world-Christianity. We have received 'a kingdom that cannot be shaken'; but it is only by the triumph of love and the practice of 'the unity of the Spirit' that the authority of Christ over the human soul can be finally secured.

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